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New teachings, new learnings

Global church growth means
fresh understandings of history

Minding
Mennonite
Memory

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On the cover: A Congolese Mennonite church worker leads a class for women. The development of the country's Mennonite churches led to greater ministry opportunities for women starting in the 1970s.

Credit: Mennonite Church USA Archives – North Newton, Kan.

New ears, fresh eyes

by Rich Preheim

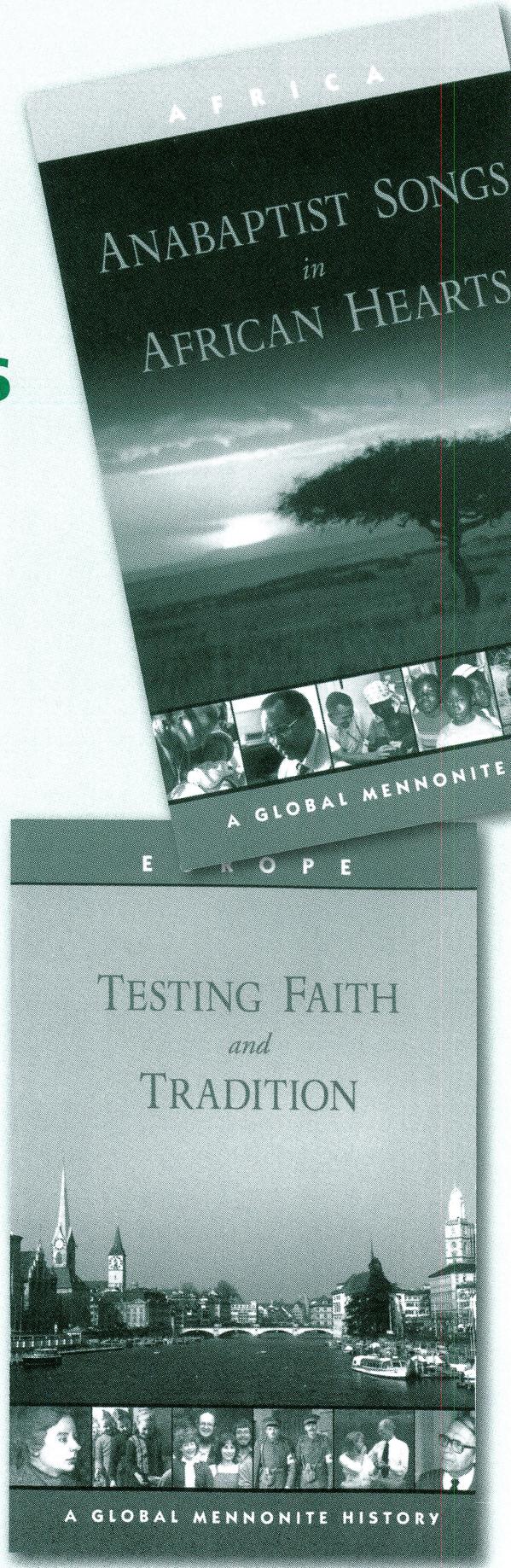
Once upon a time, barely a century ago, the world's Mennonites were almost exclusively white, rural people scattered across Europe and North America. To be sure, there were isolated pockets of diversity—Hindus in India, Bantus in Congo, Cheyennes in the United States—but being Mennonite generally meant being Germanic with distinctive cultural and religious understandings derived from that heritage.

That was then, this is now.

The most recent Mennonite World Conference census reports nearly 1.5 million members of Mennonite and related groups around the globe—and less than a third of them are in Europe and North America. While the number of adherents in those traditional Mennonite homelands continues to stagnate and even decrease, the church is rapidly increasing in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The Global Mennonite History Series was launched a dozen years ago to recognize and celebrate that great and growing mix of ethnicities, languages, and cultures that now enrich the international family of faith. The first volume, *Anabaptist Songs in African Hearts*, came out in 2003, followed last year by the Europe volume, *Testing Faith and Tradition*, both published by Good Books and Pandora Press. In process are books on the Asia and Pacific region, Latin America, and North America.

The Mennonite church is not the only thing that has changed. The way history is done is also different, said John A. Lapp, the series' coordinator and co-editor. A former executive secretary of Mennonite Central Committee, he earned a doctorate in history from the University of Pennsylvania and taught at Eastern Mennonite University and Goshen College. Lapp calls himself an institutional historian, looking at human development through

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Congo: New rhythms in new places

by Erik Kumedisa

One of the effects of Congo's independence from Belgium in 1960 was the movement of the population towards the urban centers. Many Mennonites arrived in the cities of Kinshasa, Kananga, Mburi Mayi, and Kikwit in search of employment. Mennonite Christians found each other in the cities, started prayer groups, and eventually formed churches. At first they worshipped as they always had in the rural Mennonite churches that they came from. They sang the songs that had been translated from English and German, songs that had been introduced along with the message of salvation. The use of African instruments was forbidden. For example, the use of a drum was considered a sin, because the drum was associated with pagan practices.

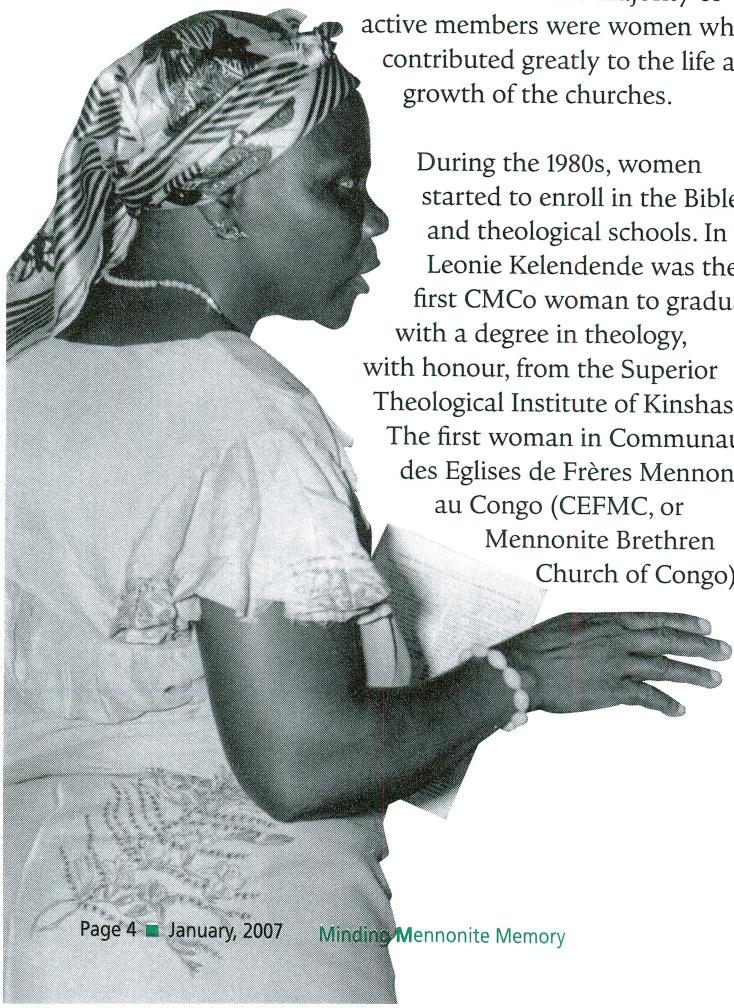
However, these Mennonite Christians in urban centers had planted churches next to other churches, such as Pentecostal churches. These other churches prayed and worshipped in a manner different from the Mennonites, and Mennonites began to wonder why. In addition, in the 1970s Congolese President Mobutu Seso Seko introduced the idea of "authenticity." He invited Congolese to be proud of their culture. The Congolese people were invited to use African names and wear clothing that reflected African cultures rather than Western cultures. During the same period, the minister of information and propaganda organized a 48-hour festival of dance in the large Kinshasa stadium. Each tribal group was represented in order to exhibit its music and dances. These events were broadcast live on radio and TV. Representatives from other African countries were invited to attend the festivities. African songs accompanied by the rhythm of Congolese drums began to appear in church worship services, first in the cities and then all over.

In the 1980s a renewal movement manifested itself in many Congolese churches, including Mennonite. Some of the visible signs of the influence of this movement were teachings that stressed the Holy Spirit and its manifestations, all-night prayer and praise vigils, and prayers during worship where everyone would pray out

Excerpted from *Anabaptist Songs in African Hearts* by Samuel Asefa, Alemu Checole, Bekithemba Dube, Doris Dube, Michael Kodzo Badasu, Erik Kumedisa, Barbara Nkala, I.U. Nsasak, Siaka Traore, and Pakisa Tshimika. Copyright by Good Books and Pandora Press (www.GoodBooks.com, www.PandoraPress.com). Used by permission. All rights reserved.

loud simultaneously. In most cases the movement spread spontaneously. Changes in the manner of praying, singing, teaching, and worship were not accepted by everyone. Some leaders embraced the changes, others warned against the dangers of excess, and still others excommunicated members who advocated the changes, saying that these new ways were not Mennonite. All the difficulties notwithstanding, today almost all Mennonite churches use traditional instruments and permit certain forms of dance, and many have integrated the new ways of praying and singing into the activities of the church.

Important changes were also taking place regarding the role of women, who had held a secondary role in the decision-making bodies of the church. Congolese Mennonite women recognized the importance of the contribution of women to the life of the church and organized themselves. From the 1980s on there were departments of women's works in the structures of the Mennonite churches as well as Mennonite women's associations at the level of the local church or parish, the district, the provinces, and the national church bodies. These departments and associations organized seminars in evangelism, public health, and community development. In the Communauté Mennonite au Congo (CMCo, or Mennonite Church of Congo), for example, Kafutshi Mulebo was a dynamic leader who, beginning in the 1970s, conducted seminars on the role of women in the church. In most Mennonite churches the majority of active members were women who contributed greatly to the life and growth of the churches.



During the 1980s, women started to enroll in the Bible and theological schools. In 1984 Leonie Kelendende was the first CMCo woman to graduate with a degree in theology, with honour, from the Superior Theological Institute of Kinshasa. The first woman in Communauté des Eglises de Frères Mennonites au Congo (CEFMC, or Mennonite Brethren Church of Congo) to

graduate with a theology degree was Kadi Hayalume. Slowly, other Mennonite women followed their example by choosing theological studies. In November 2001, sixteen Mennonite women theologians gathered in Kinshasa to address the problems of Congolese Mennonite women theologians. At the end of the gathering they formed the Association of Congolese Mennonite Women Theologians. Pastor Kadi Hayalume was elected president, Pastor Ngombe Kidinda was elected vice president, and Pastor Swana Falanga was elected secretary. These three went on to represent Congolese Mennonite women at a gathering of African Mennonite and Brethren in Christ women held in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, July 31-August 1, 2002.

In addition to the women's movement in the Congolese Mennonite churches, we must also note the lay movement. In the CMCo at the beginning of the 1970s, the general secretary and the legal representative were two distinct and separate positions of responsibility at the head of the church. In order to become general secretary one had to be a pastor, but a legal representative could be a lay person. At some point, there was confusion and tension surrounding the job descriptions of these two positions, and in order to avoid such tension, the general secretary of the time, Rev. Kabangy, convinced the General Council of the church to modify the constitution of the church by combining the two positions into one. From that time on, the same person was both general secretary (today president) and legal representative, and in order to be eligible one had to be a pastor. This decision had far-reaching implications. To some lay members, this seemed to be a clericalization of the church. One lay church member wrote:

In 1969 an interest group revised the constitution with the intention of pushing lay intellectuals aside from church administration in order to institute a clerical system in contradiction with the declaration of the Bible in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. ... To refresh our memories, from the beginning of the sixteenth century Anabaptist Mennonites included intellectuals, theologians, and university professors who approached the Word of God with simple hearts, So it is that in Mennonite churches one finds lay preachers next to pastors, ... all equally consecrated for God's ministry and recognized as such by the local assembly according to their gifts. ... We are all called to put our spiritual and material gifts at the service of the church according to need. Consequently, we must be prudent with the system of clergy that we are instituting in our Christian community.¹

This kind of critique did not come just from lay members. In a memorandum addressed to the CEFMC, Kinshasa pastors stated:

We recommend that the General Assembly rehabilitate the position of administrative secretary at all levels of the church. We have to stop bureaucratizing the ministry of evangelization. ... We also hope that the spirit of teamwork, cooperation, and unity will characterize all of those in charge of the administration of the church.²

Several factors help us understand the evolution of the tension between clergy and laity. When missionaries were in leadership, those who engaged in spiritual tasks often (though not always) occupied the positions of leadership. In addition to this precedent, the interchurch organization United Church of Christ in Congo, under the influence of the Mobutu government that wanted to centralize power even in the churches, exerted pressure on its member churches to adopt more or less uniform administrative structures—a tendency that the Mennonite churches did not escape. Whatever the reasons, feeling marginalized by the structures of the Mennonite churches, starting especially in the 1980s, lay members organized themselves to express their views on the problems of the church and to contribute their spiritual and material gifts to the work of the Mennonite churches. Thanks to this movement, dynamic lay movements exist today at all levels of each Mennonite church conference in the Congo. More progress is needed, but today lay members are represented in most of the decision-making bodies of the church.

Lay people had always been involved as teachers, nurses, elders, deacons, ushers, etc., but the decade of the 1980s marked a turning point for Mennonite churches in the Congo in terms of community development work. Several young people of the CEFMC can be named as examples of this new involvement.

After finishing his master's degree in public health, Pakisa Tshimika returned to Kajiji in August 1980 to become the first non-missionary and university graduate to work as administrator of a 150-bed hospital, serving a population of more than 80,000 people. Denis Matshifi followed just a few months later to become the first non-missionary physician in the CEFMC medical work. We should note that at about the same time, two young Congolese medical doctors, Makina Nganga and Keta Binze, started working in the CMCo. When Tshimika later got his doctorate in public health and Matshifi his master's degree, they helped CEFMC establish DESADEC, the Department of Health and Development. This department helps the church think about ways to minister to the whole person by supervising hospitals, raising livestock, organizing small credit unions, etc. Others such as Toss Mukwa, Bertin Adingite, and Albert Tshiseleka became



The Mennonite congregation at Nyanga in central Congo at worship. Started as a mission station in 1921 by Congo Inland Mission, Nyanga has become an important Mennonite center, including a church-affiliated school.

Credit: Mennonite Church USA Archives – North Newton, Kan.

involved, with Tshiseleka replacing Tshimika as coordinator of DESADEC. Maurice Matsitsa, who was director of a carpentry school, became Tshimika's assistant when he was appointed director for Africa for MBMSI, the North American Mennonite Brethren mission agency. In 1996 DESADEC expanded to include a woman, Charlotte Djimbo, in the development service.

In addition to increasing the number of Congolese medical doctors and nurses in church-run public health programs, the CMCo also created a Department of Service and Development which included agricultural and community development, a garage for maintaining vehicles, a cattle-raising project, building projects, etc., under the leadership of lay members such as Lovua Mujito and Bambidi. Communauté Evangelique au Congo (CEM, or Evangelical Mennonite Community), the country's third Mennonite conference, also started development work, inviting a Mennonite Central Committee volunteer couple to work with the Mbaji Mayi area churches in ox traction and other areas. 

Erik Kumedisa is a teacher, writer and CEFMC pastor in Kinshasa.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Lamba-a-Gindamba, "L'instabilité: base de confusion et d'incompréhension dans la Communauté Mennonite au Congo," open letter to the members of the church written about 1987.
- 2 Excerpt from a memorandum addressed by Kinshasa pastors to the CEFMC General Assembly held in Kikwit August 25-31, 1993.

Members of the Hollandsch Doopsgezind Emigranten Bureau, or Dutch Mennonite Office of Migration, pose for a photo at a Russian Mennonite refugee camp in Germany. The bureau was organized in 1924 to support the Mennonites in Russia, providing material assistance and helping them resettle in North and South America. It was just one expression of a new Dutch Mennonite vitality that emerged in the first decades of the 20th century.

Credit: Mennonite Church USA Archives – Goshen, Ind.



Netherlands: Renewal, response, relationships

by Annelies Verbeek and Alle G. Hoekema

At the end of the nineteenth century, the spiritual growth of Dutch Mennonites stagnated, much as happened in other Protestant denominations. At the beginning of the twentieth century Dutch Mennonites needed new enthusiasm. The main motivation for renewal came from an external source. In 1903 George Cadbury, a wealthy Quaker chocolate manufacturer, put his large country house called Woodbrooke at Selly Oak, near Birmingham, United Kingdom, at the disposal of an "Adult School Movement," a religious renewal movement. Woodbrooke became a retreat and conference center where Quaker spirituality formed the driving force. Young theology students from

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Excerpted from *Testing Faith and Tradition* by Claude Baecher, Neal Blough, James Jakob Fehr, Alle G. Hoekema, Hanspeter Jecker, John N. Klassen, Diether Götz Lichdi, Ed van Straten, and Annelies Verbeek. Copyright by Good Books and Pandora Press (www.GoodBooks.com, www.PandoraPress.com). Used by permission. All rights reserved.



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Northwest Mennonite Conference Historian, Mary Burkholder, 112 Margaret Ave, Duchess, AB T0J 0Z0. Telephone: (403) 378-4372

Ohio Amish Library Inc., Paul Kline, 4292 State Route 39, Millersburg, OH 44654. Telephone: (330) 893-4011

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Peace and Anabaptist Library, The, 314 E 19th St, New York, NY 10003. Telephone: (212) 673-7970, Fax: (212) 673-7970, E-mail: manager@mennohouse.com or E-mail: mmfpastor@yahoo.com | Web site: www.mennohouse.org

People's Place Quilt Museum, The, Jan Mast, curator, E-mail: jmast@goodbks.com, 3510 Old Philadelphia Pike, PO Box 419, Intercourse, PA 17534-0419. Telephone: (717) 768-7171 or (800) 828-8218, Fax: (717) 768-3433 or (888) 768-3433, E-mail: custserv@ppquiltmuseum.com | Web site: www.ppquiltmuseum.com

Pequea Bruderschaft Library, PO Box 25, Gordonsville, PA 17529

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Netherlands ...cont. from page 6

the Netherlands felt attracted to this work. Among them were several Mennonites, notably Tjeerd Oeds Hylkema, who wrote his seminary paper on that subject in 1911. Back home, those who had attended meetings in Woodbrooke continued to come together and founded a still-existing inter-confessional retreat center in the village of Barchem, in the eastern part of the country.

Ten Mennonite participants went one step further. They wanted to transmit their pietistic experiences of religious renewal to the wider church. Hence they founded the *Gemeentedagbeweging* (literally: Congregations' Day Movement), a movement on behalf of yearly spiritual meetings of all Mennonites. In a non-dogmatic, Bible-oriented way this new movement encouraged congregational and individual faith and became a stimulus for Bible study and mission. The first national Congregations' Day was held in 1917 in Utrecht. The movement clearly wanted to counterbalance the self-complacent mentality of bourgeois Mennonitism.

Soon the organizers realized that they needed conference centres of their own to meet their goals. The first *Broederschapshuis* (home of/for the Mennonite brotherhood) to be built, as a simple barracks, was near the village of Elspeet (1925); now it is called *Mennorode*. Soon other homes followed: *Frederhiem* ("Grounds of Peace" in the Frisian

language) near Steenwijk in 1931, Schoorl in 1933, and finally Bilthoven. Mennonites from all over the country gathered at these retreat centres for study, retreat, and holidays. Though they have been



In 1921 London, Dutch Mennonite leader Tjeerd Oeds Hylkema (right) stands with American Mennonite Orie O. Miller (center) and Benjamin H. Unruh, a Russian Mennonite instrumental in the post-World War I immigrations to Canada and South America. Hylkema was greatly influenced by his experiences at the Woodbrooke retreat and conference center near Birmingham, helping spur renewal among Mennonites in the Netherlands in the years before World War II.

Credit: Mennonite Church USA Archives – Goshen, Ind.

extended and modernized since, the first three centres still function well. The fact that these projects came into being at a time of serious economic recession (from 1929 on) demonstrates both the commitment to spiritual renewal and community building and the optimistic mood and inner strength of the Dutch Mennonites during these years.

The *Gemeentedagbeweging* founded a number of task forces: on behalf of mission, Bible study, abstinence from alcohol, promotion of church music, and against military service. Contacts with Mennonites, Quakers, and others abroad were stimulated. Several pamphlets were published, many conferences organized, and a monthly periodical, *Brieven* (Letters), served as a communication channel between 1917 and 1941.

In 1928 the Mennonite Youth Association (*Doopsgezinde Jongeren Bond*) was founded. This organization joined the already existing *Vrijzinnige Christelijke Jeugd Centrale*. Both associations organized summer camps, scouting groups and discussion groups. Youth homes were built in Giethoorn and elsewhere.

Peace Issues

The *Arbeidsgroep tegen den Krijgsdienst* (Task Force Against Military Service), founded in 1923, became the most active group within the renewal movement. From the end of the nineteenth century there had been pacifist and anti-militaristic groups in Europe, often connected with Christian anarchism and socialism. Tolstoy's idealism provided one example. These movements also had followers in the Netherlands. One important event was the publication of a manifesto in 1915, in the middle of World War I, during which the Netherlands remained neutral. The signatories expressed support to those who refused to serve in the army. A number of signers were brought into court because of "agitation"; among those who were sentenced to two weeks in prison were two Dutch Mennonites, Jan Gleysteen and Lodewijk van Nierop.

The first conscientious objector in the Netherlands was jailed in 1895, even before a law on military conscription had been passed (1898). The first conscientious objector from a Mennonite background was Jan Terweij in 1904. The best known among a limited group of Mennonite conscientious objectors who were jailed was Cor Inja from Zaandam, who wrote a diary during the eight months he spent in prison in 1925 in The Hague—the same prison where the Serbian ex-president Milosevic was detained. Inja received good support from many pastors and members of Mennonite congregations, and even got a visit by the North American Henry J. Krehbiel, who a month earlier had attended the first Mennonite World Conference in Basel.

The Task Force Against Military Service remained active until 1940. In 1928 it formulated a statement of principles. Together with other organizations, a number of conferences and actions were organized and brochures written. The group represented a minority opinion among the Dutch Mennonites of those years.

The Role of the ADS

The *Gemeetedagbeweging* took the lead as a grassroots renewal movement and also as a tool for the growing involvement of women. Women participated and even took the lead in many task forces and committees and were the ones who assisted impoverished families during the years of economic crisis after 1929. For some years the Haarlem congregation even promoted a kind of voluntary social service year for women called *dienende arbeidsters* or “serving labourers.” However, the *Algemeine Doopsgezinde Scoiëtet* (ADS, or General Mennonite Conference) enlarged its role as well. Next to its responsibility to maintain a seminary and to safeguard the old age pensions of ministers, the ADS represented Mennonites in interdenominational organizations, such as the Dutch Bible Society, and, beginning in 1923, on the Central Committee of Liberal Protestantism (though expressly “on behalf of a majority within the ADS”). When an *Oecumenische Raad* (Ecumenical Council) was created in 1935, the ADS was among the seven founding churches.

The increasing mobility of the population, mainly caused by industrialization, led to church members living in places where no Mennonite congregation was to be found. Some ten percent of all *Doopsgezinden* belonged to this group. On behalf of these “diaspora” *Doopsgezinden*, a new series of edifying pamphlets was published, the *Geschriftjes ten Behoeve van de Doopsgezinden in de Verstrooing* (“Small writings on behalf of *Doopsgezinden* living in dispersion”) not only about church history and the present life of the church but also about the problems of Mennonites in Russia (by Cornelius Krahn) and Brazil (by Z. Kamerling). Sixty-one issues were published between 1897 and 1941. There were even a number of Dutch Mennonites living in the Dutch Indies who asked the ADS to “come here and help us.” Several new congregations came into being from this diaspora situation in cities like Apeldoorn, Heerlen, Eindhoven, and ’s-Hertogenbosch. Finally the ADS founded a *Commissie ter Uitdeling*, a committee that still exists and deals with financial subsidies to poor congregations. In the field of liturgy, the ADS participated in preparing and publishing a new hymnal along with several smaller, liberal churches (1943). Some 50 Mennonite hymns were included in this collection.

Seminary and Theology

The changing social and cultural mood in society at large also

influenced the Mennonite seminary. After serious discussions in the seminary board and within the ADS, female students were welcomed from 1906 onwards, though in the beginning they were not entitled to receive scholarships. The Dutch Mennonites were the leading Protestant church in this respect.¹ The first woman to finish her seminary studies was Annie Mankes-Zernike (1911). She became the first female minister in the Netherlands and served the congregation of Bovenknijpe (near Heerenveen, Friesland) from 1911 to 1915. Then she married a painter, Jan Mankes, and resigned her ministry. Between 1925 and 1940, 97 students were admitted to the seminary; 33 of them were women. In 1939 twelve female ministers (out of a total of 102) were working in Mennonite congregations.

Though seminary professors like I. J. de Bussy and later W. Leendertz were respected in the field of ethics and philosophy of religion—the latter was the first to promote Kierkegaard’s philosophy in the Netherlands—the most influential person of this period was Wilhelmus Johannes Kühler (1874–1946). He revived interest in the history of the Dutch Mennonites and played an important role in the ADS itself.

Between the world wars, Mennonite theology was partly influenced by the stream of liberal, rationalistic theology, but several theologians and pastors were attracted by Karl Barth’s dialectical theology. Frits Kuiper (1898–1974) even debated with Barth concerning infant baptism when the latter visited the Netherlands, and he wrote a report on Barth’s refusal of infant baptism (1939). Kuiper was an active socialist and anti-militarist; between 1922 and 1924 he stayed 18 months in the Soviet Union. In 1938 he vigorously rejected any totalitarian regime and stood up in defense of the Jews.² As a pastor, he took part in the resistance movement during the war and later became an influential Old Testament scholar with special emphasis on Jewish thought; as a Christian with Messianic expectations, he called himself a Zionist.

International Contacts, Relief, Mission

The former *Fonds voor Buitenlandsche Nooden* (Dutch Relief Fund for Foreign Needs) had ended its activities in 1758, due to the fact that the persecution of brothers and sisters in the faith had ceased, but it got a successor in 1920. Dutch Mennonites had been well informed about the fate of Russian Mennonites through the letters of Benjamin H. Unruh in 1920 and by a booklet written by T. O. Hylkema in this same year. Within four years, some 240,000 Dutch guilders were collected, some Dutch Mennonites were sent to Russia to organize the relief, and food and clothing were shipped to Sebastopol.

In 1924 another phase began, as many Russian Mennonites tried to escape. In June 1924 a *Hollandsch Doopsgezind Emigranten Bureau* (Dutch Mennonite Office of Migration)

was founded in Rotterdam.³ The work of this office was carried out only because of the good relations between the local congregation, especially its minister, S. H. N. Gorter, and the local government and harbour authorities. Of course, this relief work was done in close cooperation with Mennonite Central Committee. By 1930, over 1,000 Russian refugees had passed through Rotterdam. Later the numbers decreased and the activities of the office came almost to a standstill in 1936. The early groups migrated to Canada. Later they went to Mexico, Brazil, and Paraguay.

In April 1937, the Dutch Mennonites briefly supported a group of 31 anti-militarist Hutterites who had been expelled by Germany. It led to protests by German Mennonites who denied that these Hutterites had ties to the Mennonites.⁴

Dutch Mennonites took an active part in the international Mennonite World Conferences of Basel (1925) and Danzig (1930), the latter meant to coordinate the international relief to Russian Mennonites. And of course, the Mennonite World Conference of 1936 in Elspeet and Witmarsum, primarily organized by the Dutch Mennonites, provided an excellent opportunity to broaden international ties, though the shadows of the Nazi regime in Germany were already falling over Europe.

In the meantime, the work of the mission in the Dutch Indies continued. In several respects it was enlarged, partly because the colonial government provided financial means for educational and medical programs. Therefore a number of nurses (from Russia), medical doctors (mostly Dutch non-Mennonites), administrators, and teachers could be sent. The missionary work proper, both on Java and in South Tapanuli (North Sumatra), was carried out and financed predominantly by Russian, and later German, missionaries. Unfortunately the mission work seemed to lack real vision during these decades. 

Annelies Verbeek is pastor of the Mennonite congregation of Haarlem in the Netherlands and a member of the editorial board of Doopsgezinde Bijdragen, the Dutch Mennonite historical journal. Alle G. Hoekema is a former missionary to Indonesia and pastor in the Netherlands and now lectures on missiology and practical theology at the Mennonite Seminary in Amsterdam.

ENDNOTES

- 1 J. M. Welcker, "Een Eeuw Doopsgezinde Kweekschool, 1811-1914," *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen* NR 11 (1985): 44-86; see also J. M. Welcker, "De Doopsgezinde Kweekschool tot 1940," *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen* NR 15 (1988): 11-54.
- 2 E. I. T. Brussee-van der Zee, "Broederschap en nationaal-socialisme," *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen* NR 11 (1985): 118-129.
- 3 See Jeanet van Woerden-Surink, *Hollandsch Doopsgezin Emigranten Bureau 1924-1940* (n.p., seminary paper, 1999).
- 4 E. I. T. Brussee-van der Zee, "Broederschap en nationaal-socialisme," 121-122

New ears, fresh eyes ...cont. from page 2



Participants in a 1995 conference at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary discuss Anabaptism's growth around the world and its affects on historical understandings. The gathering led to the creation of the Global Mennonite History Series.

Credit: Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary

the lens of the organizations and structures—such as governments, churches, and businesses—that shape human society. Understanding those institutions came through the records they produced, like correspondence, periodicals, ledgers, and diaries. "I've had to unlearn some of my ways of doing things and learn to appreciate other styles," Lapp said.

African cultures, for example, place great importance on storytelling as means of preserving the past. That is reflected in *Anabaptist Songs in African Hearts*. "It tells lots of stories, remembrances," Lapp said. "It doesn't dive into a lot of documents and that sort of thing. Story is authenticated by experience. Story in America is authenticated by documents. Memory is always important, but in North America we're often suspicious of it."

Jaime Prieto, author of the Latin American history, also shuns the institutional history approach. Rather, he is a social historian and has conducted hundreds of oral interviews to tell the accounts of Mennonites in Central and South America. "He's not going to focus on the powerful people and church structures and organizations," Lapp said. "He's going to talk about how people lived and worked and related to each other. It will bring us in touch with real live flesh-and-blood Mennonites."

That direction was set at a 1995 conference held at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, drawing 19 people from around the world to consider what two years later became the Global Mennonite History Series. To tell about the global church, several conference speakers emphasized, social history is more appropriate than institutional history, which is heavily biased toward the West. The churches in Africa,

Asia, and Latin America were born out of North American and European institutional initiatives: congregations, denominations, and agencies organizing to spread the good news of salvation and respond to human needs. Yet the new churches that were created as a result did not necessarily imitate that institutional character. So to focus historically on institutions would risk missing the indigenous story and result in paternalism.



John A. Lapp

"We have fought very hard not to make this a mission history," Lapp said. "The missionaries planted seeds, but the flowering of the movement is indigenous. The church has really thrived after the missionaries pulled back, after they left." He cited Ethiopia and Indonesia, which developed authentic local churches, not replications of Western Mennonite church models.

While North Americans can rejoice in their missionary successes through the Global Mennonite History Series, it is more important to understand their sisters and brothers in the Southern Hemisphere and their thriving churches. "The jig is up for the church in the North," said Lapp, borrowing from theologian and ethicist Stanley Hauerwas. "If the church is going to hear the fresh word of the Lord, it's going to come from the South. We have to empty ourselves and hear with new ears and see with fresh eyes.

"We have to provide space for those churches [so] they can tell their stories themselves."

Lapp became the series coordinator in 1997 when he was invited by Mennonite World Conference, which oversees the project. In addition to his experience as a historian, he also long had a global orientation, which was underscored by his ten years as MCC executive secretary. "When World Conference came calling, I thought it was a calling I should immerse myself in," Lapp said. "It brings together in a remarkable way my experience and interest."

He works from his Akron, Pa., home to generate financial support and find and work with authors. He is also series co-editor with Arnold Snyder, professor of church history at Conrad Grebel University College. The project has a budget of about \$400,000, most of which has been raised, primarily from North American organizations and individuals. Dutch, German, and Swiss Mennonites covered almost all the costs of the European volume.

Lapp said one of his greatest challenges was finding writers. He thought each volume would be written by one person. But that has happened only with Latin America and Prieto, professor of church history and cultural studies at Latin American Biblical University in San Jose, Costa Rica. Even the North American book is being done by a team of history professors: Steve Nolt of Goshen College and Royden Loewen of the University of Winnipeg. While all writers were paid one year's salary at local rates, most couldn't afford to take time off from their other employment. And because so many writers are juggling multiple responsibilities, such as congregational ministry and church administration, meeting deadlines has been a problem.

The Asia and Latin America volumes are the next scheduled to be released, hopefully one of them in 2007. The North America book is expected in 2008. All will be available in English, French, and Spanish, which should make them accessible for most Mennonites around the world. Local churches will be encouraged to translate the books into other languages pertinent to their regions. Interestingly, there are no plans to publish the series in German, even though that historically has been the Mennonite mother tongue.

That's just another indication of the changing Mennonite world. 

Rich Preheim is interim director of the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee and editor of Mennonite Historical Bulletin.

Global Mennonite History Series

Africa: Anabaptist Songs in African Hearts by Samuel Asefa (Ethiopia), Michael Kodzo Badasu (Ghana), Alemu Checole (Ethiopia), Bekithemba Dube (Zimbabwe), Doris Dube (Zimbabwe), Erik Kumedisa (Congo), Barbara Nkala (Zimbabwe), I.U. Nsasak (Nigeria), Siaka Traore (Burkina Faso), and Pakisa Tshimika (United States). Released 2003.

Europe: Testing Faith and Tradition by Claude Baecher (Switzerland), Neal Blough (France), James Jakob Fehr (Germany), Alle G. Hoekema (Netherlands), Hanspeter Jecker (Switzerland), John N. Klassen (Germany), Diether Götz Lichdi (Germany), Ed van Straten (Netherlands), and Annelies Verbeek (Netherlands). Released 2006.

Latin America volume by Jaime Prieto. Expected release 2007 or 2008.

Asia volume by I.P. Asheervadam (India), Gervacio Ducayag Balucas (Philippines), Adhi Dharma (Indonesia), Paulus Pan (Taiwan), and Masakazu Yamada (Japan). Expected release 2007 or 2008.

North America volume by Royden Loewen (Canada) and Steven M. Nolt (United States). Expected release 2008.

Submissions invited for historical essay contest

The Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee invites entries for its 2007 John Horsch Mennonite History Essay Contest. Competition is in three classes: graduate school and seminary, college and university, and high school. All papers should be on a subject related to Mennonite or Anabaptist history.

First place winners in each category receive \$100 and a year's subscription to *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. Seventy-five dollars is awarded to second place and \$50 to third place. All entrants receive a one-year subscription to *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*.

The deadline for submissions is June 15. Send all entries to: Director, Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526. Contest winners will be announced in the fall.

The contest is named for John Horsch, born in Germany in 1867 and died in Scottdale, Pa., in 1941. His work as a historian, writer, and editor helped create an interest in Anabaptist history among North American Mennonites.

Correction: The artist of the watercolors (*below*) that accompanied "Farm Deferments During World War II" in the October 2006 issue was misidentified. They were painted by John Lederach.



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**Mennonite
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Time for new voices

If it is true that history is written by the victors, as some pundit (it might have been Winston Churchill) has observed, then our Mennonite sisters and brothers in the Southern Hemisphere have declared their triumph. For the past decade, the Global Mennonite History Series has been researching and recording the stories of the international fellowship—and we would be wise to pay attention to what the project is publishing.

It should be no secret that Anabaptism—like much of the rest of Christianity—is mushrooming in Africa, Latin America, and Asia while it is trying to remain solvent and relevant in the traditional Mennonite homelands of Europe and North America. But it has been easy for us to miss the vitality and vibrancy of faith occurring overseas. We know—or at least should know—at some level that history gives us a foundation for understanding: where we came from, what we did, who influenced us. That's because of our Mennonite scholarship, institutions and centuries-old identity in the Northern Hemisphere. That hasn't been the case elsewhere in the world.

Until now.

The Global Mennonite History Series, the focus of this issue of *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*, has already released two of its planned five volumes, each about the church on a different continent. Now we Northerners have something that can provide necessary context and thus help us comprehend the wonders God is working from Argentina to Zimbabwe. Just as we are familiar with stories and dynamics that have shaped us where we live and worship, we can know the stories that shaped the church and its members outside North America and Europe.



Visit our web site at www.MennoniteUSA.org/history

Mennonite Historical Bulletin
Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee
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And it is becoming increasingly important that we know what shapes them, because that affects us. Our Northern notions of missions and service have changed and continue to change. The lands that once received our help are now sending help to us. Often on the frontlines of the challenges to faithfulness, they are forging new ideas about our relationships to the world's powers and principalities, sometimes at great personal risk. In Colombia, in Vietnam, in Congo, and elsewhere, we can find the same sorts of stories of witness that we get from the Radical Reformation in Europe. They are demonstrating in dramatic and subtle ways a faithfulness that should provide lessons to those of us in the traditional halls of Mennonite power.

What's more, these stories are being told by the Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans themselves. We can find accounts of the church elsewhere written by white North Americans. They have served a valuable role, but now the family of faith we have begotten has grown up. Like us in the United States, they have made mistakes and had troubles, but it is time they have their own voice. The Global Mennonite History Series is not meant to be the final word but an essential part of the conversation about the worldwide church.



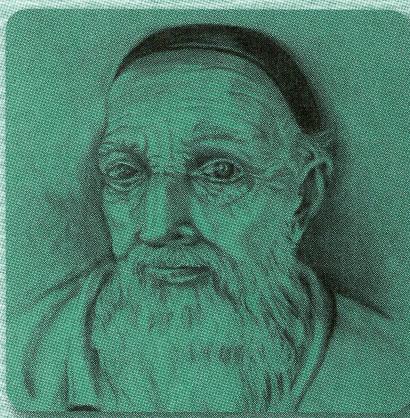
Now we must have the ears to listen and the eyes to read.

—Rich Preheim

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WHAT DO YOU KNOW?



Ten historical nuggets to enrich your faith,
enhance your knowledge, and
enliven conversation at church potlucks



Visit our web site at www.MennoniteUSA.org/history



MILESTONES, MINISTRIES, AND MYTHS

A primer for pursuing new historical understandings



An understanding of Anabaptist/Mennonite history is important to understanding ourselves, and for that there is a plethora of resources to which we can turn. Libraries and archives are filled with books and papers that can provide insight on topics ranging from atonement theory to athletics. Professors and presenters disseminate information and perspectives to students and other listeners, while visits to historical sites bring immediacy to the past.

But not everybody will read *Profiles of Anabaptist Women: Sixteenth-Century Reforming Pioneers* or the “Mennonite Experience in America” series. The five-volume *Mennonite Encyclopedia* doesn’t sit on everyone’s shelves. And it just may not be realistic to take a college course on Mennonite life and thought, much less travel to Madhya Pradesh, Münster, or Molotschna.

Hence this introduction to ten topics of historical importance. May it kindle your interest, broaden you horizons, or at least provide fodder for conversation at your next congregational potluck.



Crowds gather outside Yellow Creek Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., during the Mennonite Church's 1917 delegate assembly. The first such meeting was held in 1898 at Wakarusa, Ind., 38 years after the General Conference Mennonite Church was organized. (Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen)

Nevertheless, the newcomers often advocated for union among the groups, and in 1859 two southeastern Iowa congregations issued invitations for an organizational meeting the next spring. Held at West Point, Iowa, among those in attendance was John H. Oberholtzer, a Pennsylvanian who 13 years earlier had led a split with Franconia Conference. He made a last-minute decision to go to West Point when someone else volunteered to pay his way. Once there, he was selected chair of the new General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America (later renamed the General Conference Mennonite Church), which immediately set out to begin mission work and establish a school for training church workers.

While none of the "Old Mennonite" conferences joined the new body, the General Conference Mennonite Church received a significant boost with the arrival of thousands of Russian Mennonite immigrants in the 1870s and '80s, many of whom joined the young denomination.

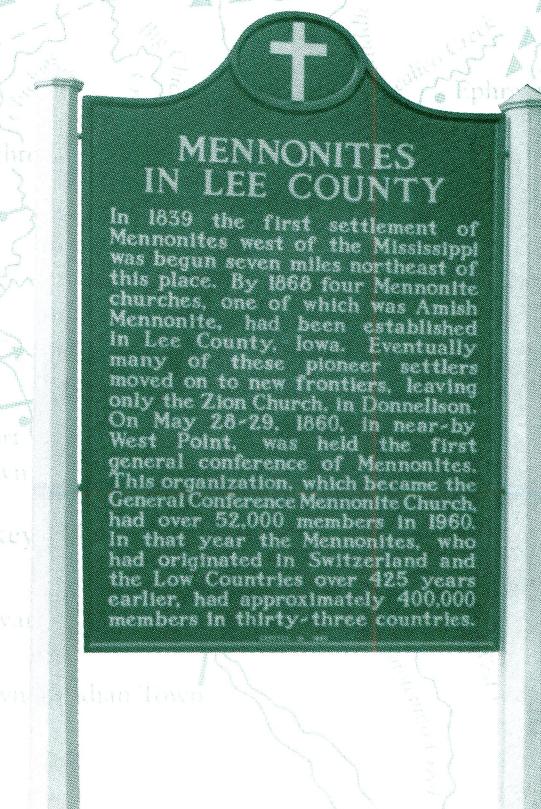
Dates of birth

(now in Dauphin County)

Before there was Mennonite Church USA, there was the General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church. While the latter was frequently called the "Old Mennonite Church," it was actually younger than the former.

The first organized body of congregations was Franconia Conference, formed in 1725 in eastern Pennsylvania. As Mennonites spread south and west, they formed new regional conferences, such as Lancaster (1775), Ohio (1834), and Virginia (1835). There was no overarching denominational structure linking them. Rather, these conferences remained officially autonomous but in fellowship with each other. Formal organizational connections started in 1892 with the creation of the Mennonite Evangelizing Board of America (later called Mennonite Board of Missions), with board representation from the various conferences. The Mennonite Church was more formally birthed six years later when the first regular churchwide delegate assembly was held to address issues of common concern among the members.

By then, however, a denominational counterpart had already been in existence for nearly four decades. Mennonite immigrants from Europe in the mid-nineteenth century didn't always join existing conferences because of theological and cultural differences with their "Old Mennonite" sisters and brothers.



Marker at Donnellson, Iowa, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the General Conference Mennonite Church, which was founded at nearby West Point in 1860. (Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen)

Anabaptism's incubator

George Blaurock, Conrad Grebel, and Felix Manz are names rightfully associated with the start of Anabaptism. After all, it was their decision to repudiate their baptism as infants and be baptized as confessing adults on January 21, 1525, that marks what is generally considered the movement's birthday.

But no birth happens in a vacuum. Like any infant, Anabaptism emerged only after a period of difficult gestation. And once it arrived, it took a longer and more painful time for it to grow and mature into what we now identify as our faith.

In the first decades of the sixteenth century, Martin Luther was not the only advocate for church reform. Andreas Karlstadt, Desiderius Erasmus, Thomas Müntzer, and Ulrich Zwingli were among those critical of Roman Catholicism and promoting positions that would become tenets of Anabaptism. They religiously nurtured Blaurock, Grebel, Manz, and others who then thought the reformers did not go far enough in pushing for change in the church.

While the January 21, 1525, baptisms signify an official break from both Roman Catholicism and the Reformation movement led by Luther, Anabaptism was not clearly defined. The early years were marked by disputes over appropriate relations with the state, use of the sword, discipline, and Christ's Second Coming. The movement drew extremists such as Jan Matthijs and Jan van Leiden, who led militant Anabaptists in the disastrous 1534-35 takeover of the German city of Münster, intent to destroy the wicked in preparation for Christ's return. Instead, the Münster Anabaptists were defeated after a long siege and executed, tarnishing the movement's image.

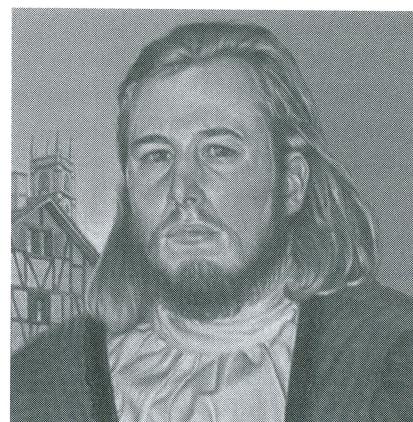
*Dutch commemorative
medallion of Menno Simons.*

(Mennonite Church USA Archives-
North Newton)

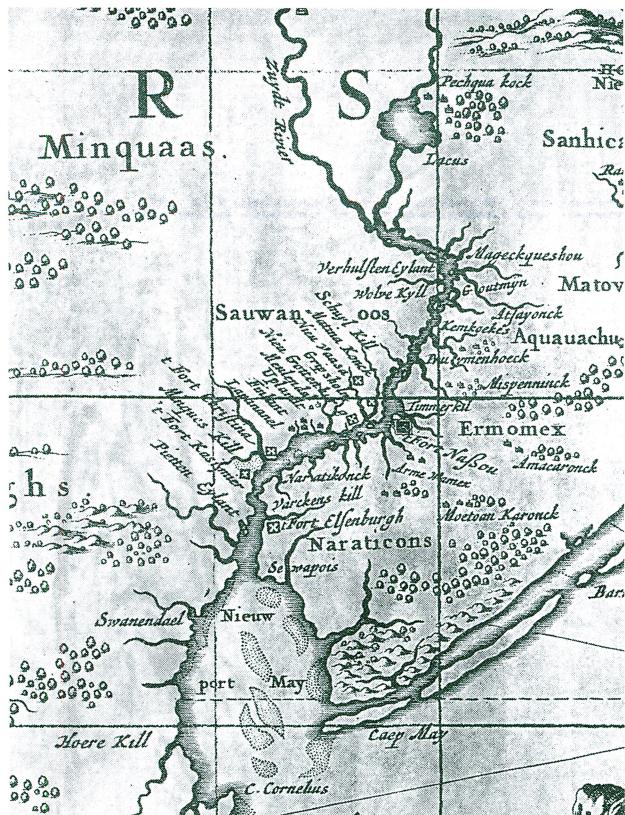


Ulrich Zwingli (Photo: John Sharp)

Out of that debacle emerged a Dutch priest by the name of Menno Simons. Long troubled by doubts about his Catholic faith, he had found himself attracted to the pious and peaceful adherents of Anabaptism. Menno respected the Münsterites' depth of conviction but abhorred their methods. So in 1536 he left the priesthood and joined the Anabaptists, providing calming, moderate leadership in the wake of dangerous fanaticism. In time the group would be named after him.



Felix Manz (Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen)



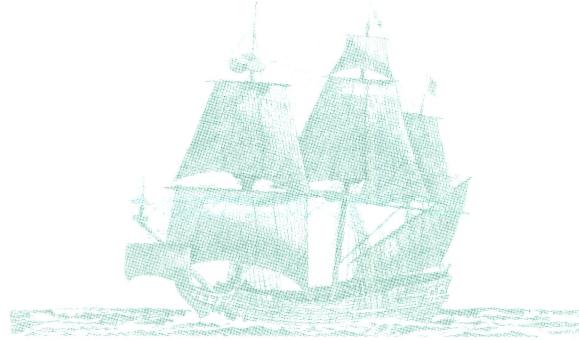
Detail from a seventeenth-century map showing where Pieter Cornelisz Plockhoy led the first settlement of Mennonites in the New World in 1663, in the area of Hoere Kill and Swanendael.

(Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton)

New World prelude

Germantown, Pa., founded in 1683, was the first permanent Mennonite settlement as well as the oldest Mennonite congregation in North America. But its denizens were not the first Mennonites to cross the Atlantic in an attempt to create a new life for themselves in the New World. A Dutch group preceded them by twenty years.

The leader was Pieter Cornelisz Plockhoy, a Mennonite from the Netherlands who had long harbored dreams of a nonsectarian Christian, semisocialist community. Plockhoy tried for two years to generate support in England but, having failed, returned to the Netherlands. In 1662 he received permission to establish a colony in the area of present-day Lewes on southern Delaware's Atlantic shore. (The land was owned by the Dutch West India Company.) A year later Plockhoy and 40 other people, including Mennonites, arrived at the site. He had hoped for 25 fellow church members, but later research



suggests it may have been only a handful. Regardless of the numbers, however, they had an impact on their new home as provisions were made for conscientious objectors to pay a tax instead of military service.

But the Dutch Delaware colony lasted barely a year. In August 1664 the English took control of the area and the next month plundered Plockhoy's settlement. The fate of its inhabitants is not clear. A 1671 census reports a community of both English and Dutch settlers, including a brother of Plockhoy's.

As for Plockhoy, it had long been thought that he and his wife remained in Delaware before eventually joining the Mennonites at Germantown. But more recent evidence indicates that it was actually Plockhoy's son who moved to Pennsylvania.

A woman's place

Conrad Grebel performed the first adult baptisms that celebrated the birth of Anabaptism. Michael Sattler is credited with writing the faith's first confession of faith. Dirk Willems was executed even though he famously saved one of his pursuers from death in an ice-covered river. Menno Simons, Jakob Ammann, and Jakob Hutter live on in the names and identities of contemporary Anabaptist streams.

Weren't there any female participants in the Radical Reformation?

Actually, there were quite a few. While Anabaptism was largely patriarchal and women were not granted official leadership positions, they were active in the movement's development. There are many accounts of



women hosting meetings (the first adult baptisms were in the Zurich apartment of Felix Manz's mother), leading Bible studies, writing hymns, and distributing alms. A third of the martyrs cited in the *Martyrs Mirror* are women.

In the Austrian region of Tirol, for example, 455 Anabaptists appear in court records from 1527 to 1529. Of those 210, or 46 percent, were women, and some of their names are included on official lists of "principal baptizers and seducers."

The church's growth near Stuttgart, Germany is largely credited to the work of women. Authorities tried to exile them, but it created hardships for their families. So the women were chained in their houses so they could perform domestic responsibilities but not leave the premises. One detainee was Margaret Hellwart, who was chained at least 21 times between 1610 and 1621. Convert Katharina Koch testified that she did not go to the local Lutheran church because Hellwart taught her everything she needed to know.

One Reformation skirmish has been called the "war of the radical ladies," as Anabaptist leader Pilgram Marpeck and reformer Casper Schwenkfeld each sought to influence a group



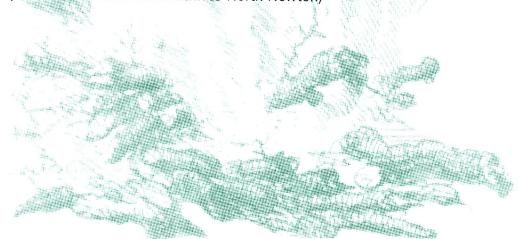
A Swiss Anabaptist woman is apprehended in this etching from the Martyrs Mirror. A third of the martyrs cited in the book are women.

(Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton)



Martyrs Mirror etching of Anneken Jans being led to her execution by drowning in Rotterdam in 1539.

(Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton)



of Protestant women in southern Germany. Magdalena von Pappenheim joined with Marpeck and even contributed a letter to the debate between the two sides. Her niece Walpurga Marschalk von Pappenheim is identified as composer of one hymn in the *Ausbund*.

Margarethe Prüss of Strasbourg, France, was the daughter of a master printer and married three printers, indicating that she was able to engage in the trade despite guild prohibitions on women. Her third husband (the previous two died) published *Prophetic Visions and Revelations of the Workings of God in These Last Days* by Ursula Jost, one of many Anabaptist women in Strasbourg recognized as prophets. Jost and her husband, Leinhard, greatly influenced Melchior Hoffman, who became an important Anabaptist leader in northern Europe.

Of course, as with their male counterparts, not all women's activities reflect positively on the faith. For instance, in St. Gall, Switzerland, in 1526, a charismatic group of women included one who claimed to be Christ and another who prophesied in the nude.

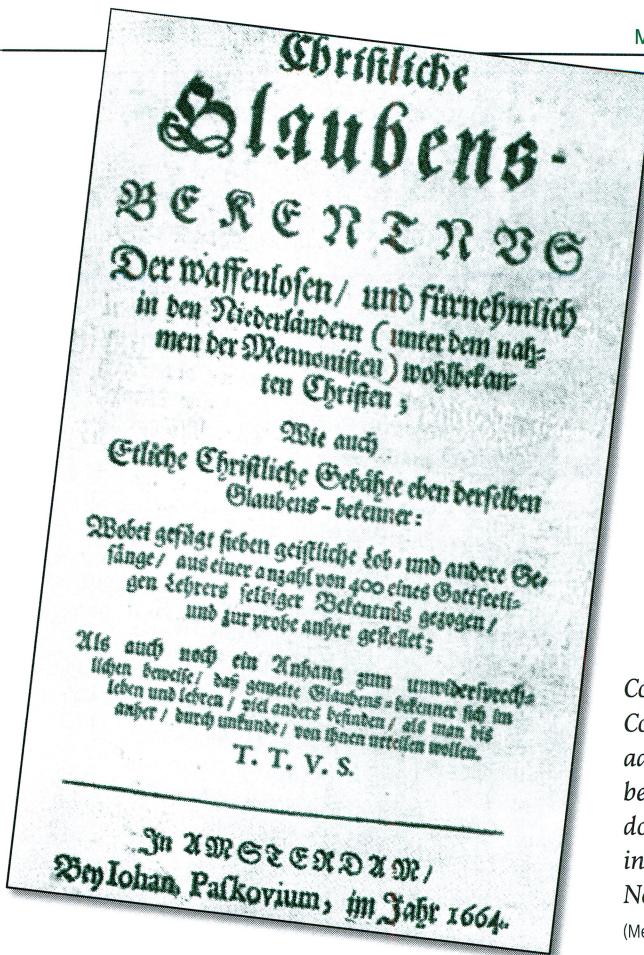
Joining, not just jettisoning

The Mennonite landscape is littered with the divisions that have torn apart the church over the centuries. But contrary to conventional wisdom that Mennonites are a schismatic people, hiding in plain sight are plenty of incidents where reconciliation and unity have trumped discord and fracture.

A landmark attempt to address differences came two years after the first adult rebaptisms. The new Anabaptist movement was suffering not only from external persecution but also from internal disagreements. In response, a meeting was held February 1527 in the Swiss village of Schleitheim. It concluded having generated the first Anabaptist confession of faith, commonly called the Schleitheim Confession, which set forth seven common beliefs for its adherents.

Similarly, the Dordrecht Confession of 1632 united two Dutch factions. The confession then spread south and was adopted by Mennonites in the Alsace and Palatinate before becoming the dominant confession among North American Mennonites. Meanwhile in the Netherlands, however, divisions continued to plague the fellowship until 1811, when the *Algemeene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit*, or General Mennonite Association, was formed, uniting almost all Dutch Mennonites into one conference.

In Russia, nearly 50 years after the Mennonite Brethren broke from the main church body, the two groups joined efforts in the early twentieth century. The older body organized itself into a formal conference in 1883, and in 1906, as civil and cultural problems started confronting all Russian Mennonites, the conference started inviting the Mennonite Brethren to address issues of common concern. Two congregations actually went further and started the *Allianz Gemeinden* to bridge the gap between the Mennonite Brethren and the original Mennonite body.



Cover of the Dordrecht Confession of Faith, adopted in 1632 and became a major unifying document for Mennonites in Europe and North America.

(Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen)

Several North American initiatives in the mid-nineteenth century also tried to unite the scattered and disparate Mennonite groups. One was the short-lived Canada-Ohio Conference, which urged “the various branches of the denomination cultivate a fraternal confidence toward each other.” That idea was taken further several years later with the creation of the General Conference Mennonite Church in 1860.

While the new body was ignored by the “Old Mennonites” and Amish, those groups were also experiencing renewed ties years after their split in Europe. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, many Mennonite and Amish groups participated in each other’s annual conferences and cooperated in publishing, evangelism, and education. That eventually led to more formal unions, as Mennonite and Amish groups merged in the early 1900s to form Indiana-Michigan, Central District, Ohio and Eastern (now Ohio and Atlantic Coast conferences), and Iowa-Nebraska (now part of Central Plains) conferences. Today they as well as their General Conference Mennonite Church sisters and brothers are all part of Mennonite Church USA.

There are plenty of incidents where reconciliation and unity trumped discord and fracture.



Annual Report

From a balanced budget to a Native American conference to ongoing projects to digitize collections, 2006-07 was a year of accomplishment for the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee. But the year also underscored long-standing issues, particularly lack of archival space, needing to be addressed.

The Historical Committee and Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership, to which the committee is responsible, continue to search for a permanent director. The committee's operations have been overseen by part-time interim leadership since John Sharp's departure nearly two years ago. Largely because of the absence of a full-time director's salary, we finished the fiscal year with income exceeding expenses by more than \$28,000. We are glad to report that it allowed us to completely repay a long-standing debt to Executive Leadership, which had covered our shortfalls in past years. We are grateful to God and to you who have financially supported us in our efforts to preserve our heritage, interpret our faith stories, and proclaim God's work among us.

Perhaps the greatest highlight of the past year was the Historical Committee-sponsored conference "Cheyenne, Arapaho, Mennonite: Journey from Darlington," held March 30-April 1 in Oklahoma. More than 200 people attended to examine the legacy of Mennonite mission efforts among Native Americans. The conference included workshops, plenary presentations, tours of historic sites, and the dedication of a burial ground for repatriated Native American remains. The conference was an important event in fostering understanding among racial groups with a dubious history of relationships.

The Historical Committee also continued its regular activities of publishing *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*, heritage gift sales, and conducting the annual John Horsch Mennonite Historical Essay Contest for student researchers. Elizabeth Miller of Goshen College won the 2006 competition with her paper on "Moody, Fundamentalism, and Mennonites: The Struggle for Particularity and Engagement in Illinois Mennonite Churches."

The foundation of the Historical Committee's work, however, remains our two archives. Located on the

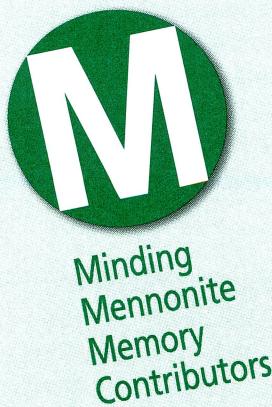
campuses of Goshen College and Bethel College, staff last year responded to nearly 1,000 research queries, well more than half of them via e-mail. Topics included genealogical studies, charismatic movement, African-American Mennonite women, Paraguayan Mennonites and Nazism, and quilts and peace theology. One researcher even wanted assistance to find the Ark of the Covenant, which he believed to be hidden by the Mennonites, Mormons, and Masons around Escondido, Calif., in the 1920s.

During the year the archives added to their holdings about 500 feet of material from Mennonite institutions, organizations, conferences, and congregations, as well as from individuals. We greatly value these additions, knowing that they will prove to be important in understanding our past as we shape our future.

But that growth has further exacerbated our space problems. In Goshen, about half of our collections are now kept in an empty residence hall because the archives is full. The problem is the same, although not as severe, in North Newton, where the archives have also started to store some files in the rooms of a former dormitory. The Historical Committee is currently in conversation with the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board and with Goshen College as we search for solutions to the space problems.

In the meantime, both archives continue to scan documents for storage on computers. The North Newton archives last fall received a grant for scanning photos from the former General Conference Mennonite Church's Commission on Overseas Mission and also continued scanning microfilms of old Prussian Mennonite church records. Goshen focused on digitizing files from its extensive H.S. Bender and S.C. Yoder collections.

A vital component of our scanning work, and indeed of much of what we do, is our volunteers in Goshen and North Newton. During the past year, 20 volunteers accumulated more than 2,600 hours in scanning, filing, editing, and other tasks. These individuals have our deepest appreciation for helping the work of the Historical Committee.


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 Esther Rinner
 James Shaw
 Esther Thieszen
 Stan Voth



Above: The Native American mission school at Darlington, Okla., started by the General Conference Mennonite Church as the first U.S. Mennonite mission initiative.

Right: Maggie Leonard, an Oklahoma Cheyenne and the first convert.

(Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton)



Church members in the Palatinate started taking monthly mission offerings in 1824.

Missions movement

One of the features of sixteenth-century Anabaptism was a fervent evangelistic zeal, which rapidly spread the movement across Europe. But it wasn't long until it was quelled by state-sponsored persecution, and the church assumed a quiet, isolated existence. Anabaptists in many areas were granted toleration in exchange for not seeking converts. It would be three centuries before Anabaptism's spiritual heirs returned to the mission field, at least in a formal way.

Mennonites in the 1800s became caught up in a new Protestant missions vitality sweeping through Europe and North America. Church members in the Palatinate in 1824 started taking monthly offerings for Baptist mission work, and six years later a West Prussian congregation held the first Mennonite mission festival. But the first Mennonite mission organization didn't emerge until 1847, when a Dutch Mennonite organization supporting an English Baptist missionary society was

reshaped as the Dutch Mennonite Mission Association. Four years later it sent Pieter Jansz and his wife to Indonesia, then a Dutch colony, as the first Mennonite foreign mission workers. The association soon started receiving substantial support from Mennonites in Russia.

Missions interest was also growing in North America, particularly in the fledgling General Conference Mennonite Church. After exploring possible ventures in Alaska and with the Dutch in Indonesia, it sent Samuel and Susanna Haury to Oklahoma in 1880 to work among the Arapaho as the first North American Mennonite missionaries. The first to go overseas was Eusebius Hershey, a member of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ (now Bible Fellowship Church), a small splinter group in eastern Pennsylvania. At the age of 67, he went to Sierra Leone on his own in 1890 and died there six months later. Mennonite Church missions began with urban stations, starting with Chicago in 1893, about the same time the General Conference Mennonite Church expanded its efforts among Native Americans in Arizona and Montana.

The first overseas workers to be sent by North American Mennonite denominations came on the heels of the famine that hit India at the close of the nineteenth century. The Mennonite Church as well as the Mennonite Brethren sent missionaries to that country in 1899, while General Conference Mennonite Church workers arrived the next year.

The Defenseless Mennonite Church (today the Fellowship of Community Churches, formerly Evangelical Mennonite Church) and Central Conference of Mennonites (now part of Mennonite Church USA) in 1911 organized the Congo Inland Mission, which continues today as Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission.



City lights

Mennonites have long been associated with rural life, and many Mennonites have trumpeted the virtues of a pastoral setting while denigrating cities' real and perceived ills. Yet the urban church is an important part of our past as well as an increasingly prominent part of our future.

The earliest North American Mennonite foray into the city came in 1865 when members of the General Conference Mennonite Church moved from rural eastern Pennsylvania into Philadelphia and organized a congregation. The Mennonite Church's first urban mission initiative was in Chicago in 1893, followed by Philadelphia; Lancaster, Pa.; Canton, Ohio; and Fort Wayne, Ind., over the next dozen years. The General Conference Mennonite Church started work in southern California around the turn of the century.

Urban efforts increased following World War II as more and more Mennonites relocated from rural areas for professional and educational opportunities. In addition, alternative service programs put young people in city assignments, fueling church development in locations such as Indianapolis and Kansas City. The first congregations to hold joint membership in the

General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church were in Kansas City and Columbus, Ohio.

Urban congregations were initially white, either because they were made up of formerly rural Mennonites or because outreach focused on white populations. But white Mennonites soon came into contact with people of color, resulting in evangelism and church planting among African-Americans and Hispanics in Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Los Angeles, and elsewhere starting in the 1920s and '30s.

Today the growing urban Mennonite presence across the continent is spurring Mennonite Church USA's racial and ethnic diversity, from Haitians in Miami to Hmong in Denver, from Ethiopians in New York City to Indonesians in Pasadena.

But not all people of color are in urban areas. Mennonite Church USA's Native American membership is located exclusively in rural areas. Some of the earliest work among Hispanics was with migrant farm workers in Colorado and Texas. And the first African-American Mennonites were from rural southern Pennsylvania.



Children exit Chicago's Woodlawn Mennonite Church, a pioneering interracial congregation started by the General Conference Mennonite Church in the 1950s.

(Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton)

Top: Sewing class from Chicago's Mennonite mission started in 1893 as the first Mennonite Church mission initiative.

(Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen)

An Iowa Amishman loads his buggy.

(Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen)



Some Amish were actually more progressive than their Mennonite neighbors.

Horse-and-buggy thinking

Driving buggies, ignoring the whims of fashion, seemingly shunning technology—those are obvious characteristics of the Amish in the twenty-first century. But what made them distinctive back in the day when nobody had automobiles or electricity?

The Amish split with the larger Mennonite body in Europe in 1693-94 over a form of church discipline called shunning, or avoiding the unrepentant. A Swiss elder by the name of Jakob Ammann pushed for stringent shunning, while another elder, Hans Reist, was more moderate, advocating for only excluding transgressors from communion. The result was not just a split between Ammann and Reist but throughout the Swiss fellowship. The “Ammann-ish” held a firmer line on nonconformity and compromise, and their leader required beards on men and simpler clothing styles.

The Amish started migrating to the United States some four decades later. By the mid-1800s they were earnestly examining their beliefs and identity as tensions developed between change-minded and tradition-minded members. Some Amish began wearing more worldly attire, built meetinghouses rather than worship in homes, became politically active, supported higher education, and adopted changes in worship style. In some cases, and in contrast to today’s perceptions, some Amish were actually more progressive than their

Mennonite neighbors. In Indiana, for example, conservative Amish ministers adopted the straight coat that was worn by the Mennonites. Despite their differences, however, Amish across the theological and cultural spectrums recognized each other as sisters and brothers in the faith. They shared the same heritage, believed in nonresistance and nonconformity (although disagreeing on some of the specific applications), and observed communion and footwashing more often than the Mennonites. Depending on their region, their attire wasn’t necessarily radically different than those around them. Unlike the Mennonites, they didn’t form conferences but remained a loose fellowship of autonomous congregations.

But it didn’t last. By the end of the nineteenth century, after a period of “sorting out,” Amish across North America found themselves in one of two camps. Those favoring maintaining the “old order” became the Old Order Amish. More progressive members called themselves Amish Mennonite, creating conference structures and cooperating with Mennonites in missions, Sunday schools, publishing, and other projects. Most of these Amish eventually joined with Mennonites and are now part of Mennonite Church USA. One exception is the Conservative Mennonite (originally Amish Mennonite) Conference, a group that was more willing to accept change than the Old Order Amish but not nearly as progressive as the others.

Meanwhile in Europe, no Old Order movement ever developed, and church members joined with Mennonites even more quickly than in the United States. The congregation at Ixheim, Germany, was the last to maintain its Amish identity, calling untrained, unsalaried ministers, upholding shunning, and observing footwashing. Some men also still wore beards. But in 1937 the Ixheim Amish merged with a nearby Mennonite congregation and dropped the Amish name.



World revolution

For the global Anabaptist family of faith, 1994 was a landmark year. That was when a Mennonite World Conference census reported for the first time that North America and Europe were no longer home to the majority of church members. The numbers in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the South Pacific continue to surge past the more traditional northern locations. Today, barely a third of the world's 1.48 million adherents live in North America and Europe.

The most recent MWC census, in 2006, shows that the United States still with the largest population at 368,280 people. Second is Congo with 216,268, and third is India with 146,095. Canada is fourth with 131,384. Africa has the most adherents of any continent with 529,703 in 19 countries. Overall, Anabaptists are found in 75 countries.

Of course, wherever the church's branches are found, its roots are in the white Northern Hemisphere. U.S. mission workers first went to Congo in 1911 and to India in 1899. The first workers arrived in Ethiopia in 1945; that country today has 130,731 Mennonites, the fifth most in the Anabaptist world. The church in Indonesia, ranked sixth with 72,624, was born out of Dutch missionary efforts starting in 1851.



Members of the Indonesia Muria Christian Church, one of three Mennonite groups in the country, sign the denomination's first confession of faith in an 1958 ceremony. Indonesia, the site of the first Mennonite foreign mission work, today has sixth-most number of Mennonites in the world.

(Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen)

By the end of the twentieth century, the offspring had surpassed their European and North American progenitors, not only in numbers but also in spiritual vitality. The coming change was heralded already in 1973 when Million Belete of Ethiopia's Meserete Kristos Church was selected as the first Mennonite World Conference president who was not Western and not white. Only one other white Westerner would hold that position over the next three decades.

MWC has undergone further changes, evolving from a regular gathering of the global fellowship into an organization with other programs, including commissions on peace and on faith and life, publications, cross-cultural initiatives, and the annual World Fellowship Sunday.

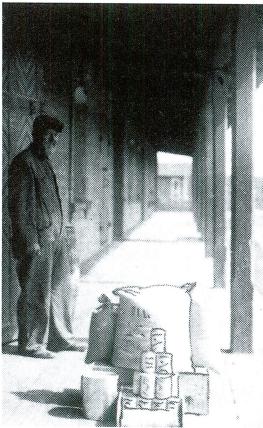
Another MWC-affiliated initiative is the Global Mission Fellowship, perhaps the greatest indicator of the global church's growth and energy. An organization of Anabaptist mission agencies, it was created in 2003 with 50 charter members from 34 countries.

A Congolese Mennonite teacher.

(Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton)

Arthur W. Slagel was one of the first three Mennonite Central Committee workers, along with Clayton Kratz and Orie O. Miller, sent to respond to the needs of Mennonites in Russia. Slagel took these photos of relief activities. Right: Mennonites on the Chortitza colony gather outside a warehouse to receive supplies. Lower right: Russian Mennonite women unpack bales of clothing sent by American Mennonites. Below: A food package from America, including 25 pounds of rice, 15 pounds of sugar, 10 pounds of lard, one pound of tea, and 20 tins of milk.

(Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen)



A center for service

It's one of the landmark developments that has shaped and defined Mennonites across the globe. Because we have said it so often, it's a name that easily rolls off tongues and lips: Mennonite Central Committee. And yet, if we stop to consider it for a moment, it's also a name that says almost nothing about helping people in need. Where did such a strange moniker come from?

By 1917 North American Mennonites were exploring ways to respond to the devastation left by World War I. The Mennonite Church, General Conference Mennonite Church, Mennonite Brethren, Krimmer Mennonite Brethren (now part of the Mennonite Brethren), and Mennonite Brethren in Christ (now the Missionary Church) all had relief organizations or were coordinating with existing ones, such as the American Friends Service Commission and the Red Cross. Attention soon turned in Russia, home to thousands of Mennonites suffering from the effects of war and revolution.

There had been some cooperation among the groups by 1920, when four Mennonites from Russia toured the United States, highlighting the needs of their famine-stricken sisters and brothers back home. The delegation's visit galvanized North Americans and directly led



to the decision to create a "central committee" of the various Mennonite relief initiatives. A meeting was held July 27-28, 1920, in Elkhart, Indiana, to plan for a united response to the Russian Mennonites' plight, and on September 1 the first three MCC workers set sail for Europe.

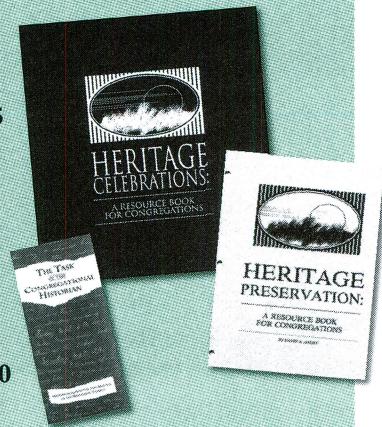
The new agency was permanently established that fall with committee representation from the Mennonite Church's Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers, General Conference Mennonite Church's Emergency Relief Commission, Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions of Lancaster Conference, Mennonite Brethren, Krimmer Mennonite Brethren, and Central Conference of Mennonites. Other members were later added as appointed by their denominations.

Resources from Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee

to help preserve our heritage, interpret our faith stories and proclaim God's work among us

Heritage Celebrations: A Resource Book for Congregations by Wilma McKee

Packed with information and ideas, it encourages congregations planning events such as anniversaries to joyfully remember their heritage and gain a vision for future mission. **\$10.95**

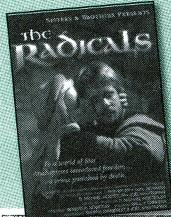


Heritage Preservation: A Resource Book for Congregations by David A. Haury

A companion piece to *Heritage Celebrations*, this 30-page manual provides direction for congregations to keep their important historical records, including what to keep and how to keep them. **\$5.00**

The Task of the Congregational Historian

A 16-page pamphlet with tips for documenting and preserving a congregation's history. **\$2.00**



The Radicals DVD The major motion picture about Margaretha and Michael Sattler and Anabaptism's birth in sixteenth-century Europe. Includes commentary by Myron Augsburger, interviews with the film's producers and other extras. Also available in Spanish. **\$29.99 plus shipping and handling (\$25 per copy for multiple copies).**



Menno Simons commemorative fraktur A teaching tool as well as artwork, this four-color fraktur (a traditional German calligraphic art form) celebrates the 500th anniversary of the birth Menno Simons in 1596. Created by noted artist Roma J. Ruth, it features text from Menno's own words on Jesus as the Prince of Peace and incorporates in the border I Corinthians 3:11, Menno's favorite Scripture. **\$25.00 plus \$3.00 for shipping and handling. Add 50¢ per additional copy.**
Also available as note cards. **\$3 for four, \$6.50 for 10, \$9 for 15, \$11 for 20.**

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Or order these and our other heritage gifts through our website: www.MennoniteUSA.org/history

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**Mennonite
Church
USA**

Historical
Committee

Dive in, go deeper

Dive into the ocean, and you will encounter amazing, intricate discoveries hidden far below the surface. Myriad forms of animal and plant life, not to mention sunken human-made treasures, are obscured by the waters above it them. So it is with history. What is initially evident is rarely everything that is present. Go deeper, and you will find great complexities that may even challenge conventional wisdom. The dramatic effects of Christopher Columbus's "discovery" of the Americas included the subjugation and annihilation of whole populations of indigenous people. The American Civil War was not just about the injustice of slavery but, perhaps more fundamentally, about economics, the government, and the legal system. For many, the 1950s was an era of great prosperity, but for others a time of persecution because of their skin color or political beliefs.

This issue of *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* is meant to encourage you to dive in, to go deeper into your understandings of the past, which shapes our present and guides our future as a people of faith. These pages are filled with attempts to briefly address some of the stereotypes, misperceptions, and bad information that can cause us, to borrow from the Apostle Paul, to look through the historical glass darkly.

Indeed, as Christians we need to be particularly aware that things are not always as they seem.

Sarah was a barren old woman whom God made the mother of nations. Bethlehem, derided as the source of nothing good, became the birthplace of the Messiah. Christ saw beyond the external identities of tax collectors and common fishermen and transformed them into the faith's greatest leaders. So we must also be ready to break the surface of our understandings.

This *MHB* is designed help you do that. The ten topics highlighted are hardly the width and breadth of knowledge pertinent to our faith. (There is, for example, nothing specifically here on the important issue of nonresistance.) Nor are they intended to be lessons in "Anabaptist/Mennonite History for Dummies." Rather, this issue provides brief introductions to selected historical issues, offering basic information to stimulate personal reflection and community discernment about identity, diversity, mission, and renewal—age-old and critical questions Mennonite Church USA is wrestling with today. Maybe the pursuit of answers will even lead you to take courses by the teachers and read books by the scholars in our midst, or to even do your own research.



So dive in and go deeper—for your benefit and the benefit of our church. 

—Rich Preheim



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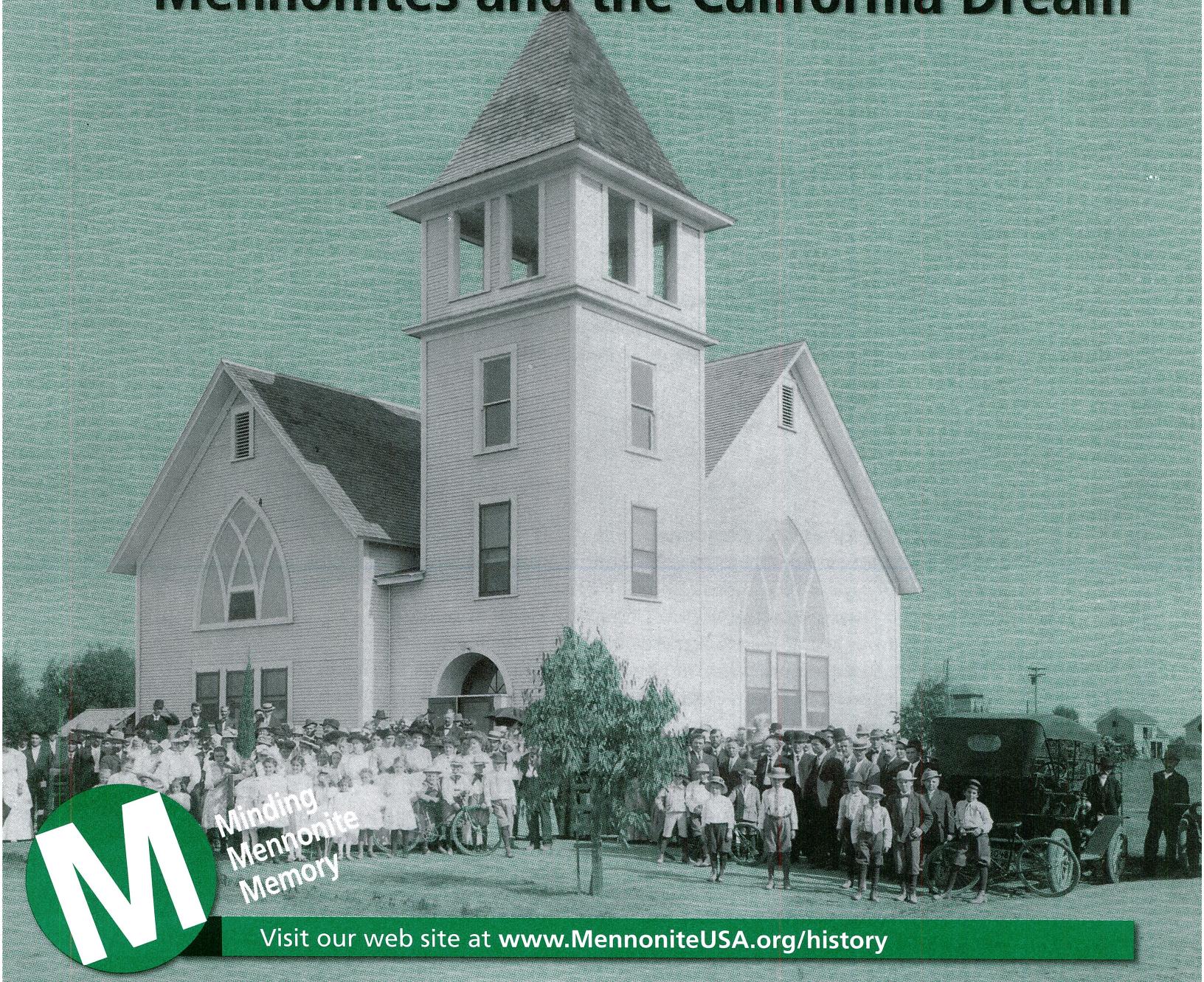
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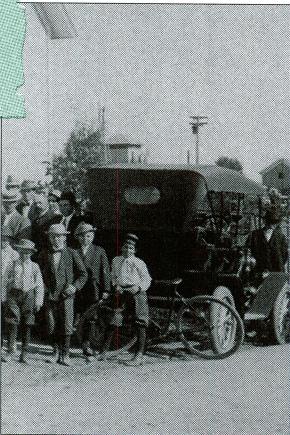
A Place in the Sun

Mennonites and the California Dream



Visit our web site at www.MennoniteUSA.org/history

In this issue



Page 3: California, which hosted the recent Mennonite Church USA convention, has for more than a century been a destination for Mennonites seeking new opportunities. Kevin Enns-Rempel provides an examination from the gold rush through its contemporary multicultural manifestation.

Page 6: Rich Preheim recounts how West Coast Mennonites played an important role in the merger of the General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church to form Mennonite Church USA.

Page 10: In 1906, a California revival movement launched Pentecostalism, which has dramatically shaped much of Christianity around the globe. Joshua R. Weaver explores its influence on longtime mission worker Nelson Litwiller, who then led its introduction into the Mennonite Church.

Page 16: Mennonite Church USA is slowly recognizing the God's work in its membership west of the Rocky Mountains, something that Mennonite historians in particular have overlooked, writes Rich Preheim.

On the cover: Participants at the 1917 General Conference Mennonite Church sessions gather around the host church, First Mennonite Church in Reedley, California. It was the first time a Mennonite denomination-wide assembly was held on the West Coast. (Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton)

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Historical Committee



Health, Wealth, and Ministry

An Overview of Mennonites' Presence in California

By Kevin Enns-Rempel

Many participants at Mennonite Church USA's biennial convention in San Jose, California, in July may have thought they ventured into a territory quite foreign to them. While the state is home to roughly 12 percent of the nation's population, less than three percent of all Mennonite Church USA members live in California. Of all Mennonite groups in North America, only the Mennonite Brethren (with almost 55 percent of their total U.S. membership found in California) have more than a small minority of its members in California.¹

It may, therefore, come as a surprise to some that the first Mennonites to settle in California—and the majority to do so during at least the first two decades of ongoing Mennonite presence in the state—were from what is now Mennonite Church USA. Though Mennonite Brethren eventually came to represent the overwhelming majority of Mennonites in the state, Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church members have played a significant part in the story.

The earliest Mennonites in California, arriving between the late 1840s and the mid-1880s, created no congregations or lasting communities. Beginning in the mid-1880s and continuing into the early 1900s, a small but significant number of Mennonites were drawn to southern California by a climate that offered possible cures for various physical ailments. These health-seekers were followed by a much larger group of Mennonites who came to the state in search of agricultural opportunities, mostly to central California in the first three decades of the 20th century. Beginning in the 1940s, California Mennonites evolved from a predominantly rural church to a more urban one and, most recently, from an almost exclusively white and English-speaking church into a remarkably multicultural body of fellow believers.

Workers pack fruit at a Mennonite-owned fruit processing plant in Reedley, California, circa 1950. The region's agricultural opportunities drew significant numbers of Mennonites in the first half of the 20th century, resulting in the formation of a dozen congregations.

(Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton)



Mennonites in Upland, California, in 1914 established a sanitarium for tuberculosis patients, seeking to serve church members moving to the state for health reasons. The sanitarium closed in 1923.

(Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton)

The first Mennonites who came to California did so in the wake of the 1849 gold rush, though we know the names of only a few.² Of this small group, the story of only one has survived in any detail. Johannes Dietrich Dyck, a Mennonite from Prussia, emigrated to the United States in 1848, leaving behind his fiancé, Helene Janzen, with the promise he would return in two or three years. After working in Wisconsin and Illinois, Dyck joined the throngs of fortune-hunters heading to California. He spent about three years in the gold fields, apparently with good success. On the way back east, however, his gold-laden pack horse was lost and his travel companions captured in an attack by Native Americans. Unable to continue on his own, Dyck returned to California. This time he stayed for about four years. He suffered another setback when a partner was murdered while sleeping next to him and their gold stolen. Dyck finally returned to Prussia in 1858, ten years after he left. He married Helene, who was still waiting for him, and together they moved to Russia.³

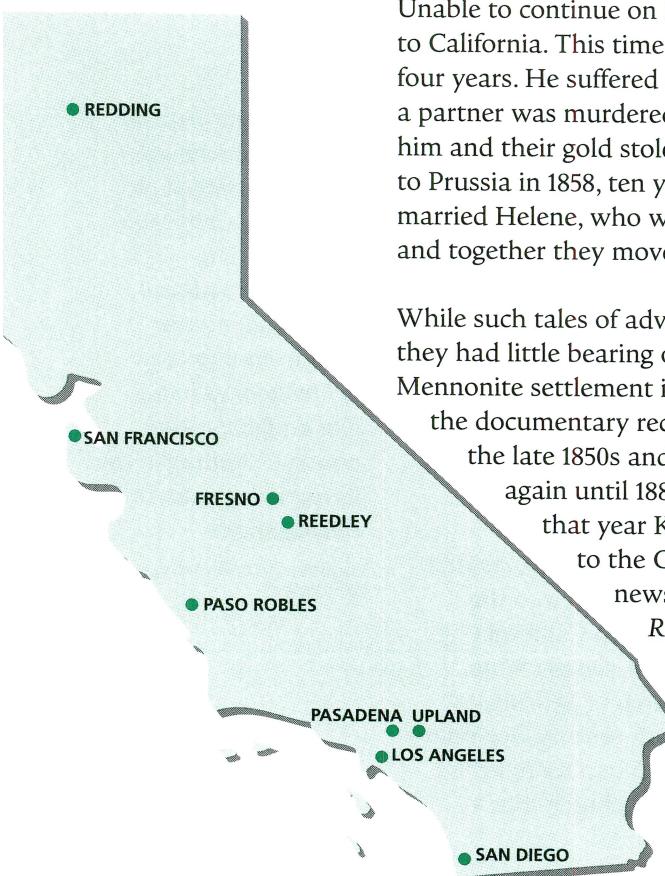
While such tales of adventure are fascinating, they had little bearing on the later story of Mennonite settlement in California. Indeed, the documentary record goes blank after the late 1850s and does not appear again until 1884. In November of that year Karl Penner wrote to the German-language newspaper *Mennonitische Rundschau* that his family had moved from Minnesota to Red Bluff, California, in the northern part of state.⁴ The Penners moved there with the

family of Gerhard and Helena Rempel from Mountain Lake, Minnesota. A few months later the Rempels relocated to nearby Redding.⁵ They were joined in 1886 by Jacob Friesen and his family from Burrton, Kansas. These three families created what apparently was the first Mennonite settlement in California.⁶

The little group struggled almost from the beginning. Karl Penner died in January 1885, leaving behind a widow and children.⁷ In August 1886 Gerhard Rempel reported, "In temporal terms it goes fairly well, though not spiritually. We are so alone, without any brothers and sisters in the faith nor any Mennonite worship."⁸ Rempel wrote to the *Mennonitische Rundschau* on a regular basis for the next several years. Though the area offered adequate economic opportunity, the absence of Mennonite fellowship continued to bother him. In 1896 the family moved to Polk County, Oregon, where they joined Zion Mennonite Church of the General Conference Mennonite Church. Reports to the *Mennonitische Rundschau* from the Penners and Friesens ceased by 1888, and it is uncertain whether they stayed in the area or moved elsewhere. What is known is that by 1896 the documented presence of Mennonites in northern California had come to an end.

Meanwhile, almost 600 miles to the south, another fledgling Mennonite community was taking shape. This one attracted Mennonites for a different reason. They came to California primarily in search of renewed health. The first known Mennonites to arrive in California specifically for this purpose were Heinrich and Ella Rees, members of the General Conference Mennonite Church who moved to Pomona from Ashland County, Ohio, in 1887. Heinrich suffered from a "throat ailment" and moved west on the advice of his doctor. In doing so, the Rees family was part of a widespread movement of Americans from colder eastern climates to the warm, dry air of California and other western states. It was thought at the time that such climates could cure or at least ease the suffering of tuberculosis, asthma, rheumatism, and numerous other diseases.

One of the areas thought to offer the greatest health benefits was the foothill area between San Bernardino and Pasadena, along the



northern edge of the Los Angeles Basin. Heinrich and Ella Rees moved into almost exactly the middle of this region. They were followed by other Mennonites, many of whom also suffered from various ailments. By the mid-1890s a large enough group of General Conference Mennonite Church members had arrived that they were meeting regularly for worship. In January 1903 a congregation was established at Upland. The first minister was Michael Horsch, a former missionary among the Native Americans of Oklahoma, who had come to California in 1902 due to the health of his wife, Oillie.

By 1906 a few members of the Mennonite Church had also arrived in Upland. An editorial comment in the General Conference Mennonite Church magazine *The Mennonite* of 10 September 1908 suggests hope that these newcomers would join the existing First Mennonite Church, "but that inveterate incompatibility deplorably characteristic of us Mennonites seems to call for another congregation there."⁹ In fact, it would not be until many years later that a Mennonite Church congregation was established in Upland.

While most health-seeking Mennonites settled in the Upland area, others were scattered across various parts of southern California. Reports in the Mennonite press from towns such as Azusa, Glendora, Pasadena, San Diego, Los Angeles, Long Beach, and Huntington Park provide evidence of the many places that Mennonites went to restore their physical conditions.

The Mennonites in Upland felt a duty to fellow Mennonites who came west for health reasons. Discussions about establishing a sanitarium for the care of tuberculosis patients had begun there as early as 1905, and in 1914 the Mennonite Sanitarium was dedicated at Alta Loma, near Upland. It struggled for survival almost from the beginning. Perhaps the main reason for this difficulty is that the California health craze had already peaked before the sanitarium even opened. By 1900, medical doctors were placing less faith in the curative powers of climate and fewer of them recommended the long journey west to their patients. While many individuals still came west for that reason, the numbers were already declining by the time the Mennonite Sanitarium opened in 1914. It was finally closed in 1923.¹⁰

At about the same time the Upland settlement was taking shape, several General Conference Mennonite Church families established a settlement near the town of Paso Robles, about halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco. In 1896 Jacob Hege, a minister from Wisner, Nebraska, visited the area. He wrote a letter to the *Christlicher Bundesbote*, published by the General Conference Mennonite Church, praising the region's potential for both health and agricultural purposes and encouraging other Mennonites to join him in purchasing land there. In October four families—Jacob and Elisabeth Hege, Jacob E. and Anna Claassen, Gerhard and Helena Schroeder, and brothers Edwin and William Leisy—had moved to the area.¹¹ The Claassens and Schroeders both came from Beatrice, Nebraska, while the Leisy brothers were from Iowa.

At this point, the settlement at Paso Robles had only a few more Mennonites than had the short-lived one at Redding. But unlike Redding, other Mennonites soon followed. In 1897 another minister, Aron J. Wiebe from Beatrice, Nebraska, moved there. The presence of two ministers offered the immediate promise of leadership and stability that had never been present in Redding and that took several years to develop in Upland. The group organized itself as a General Conference Mennonite Church congregation in November 1897, the first to do so in California.

As the 20th century began, the Mennonites of California included a yet-to-be organized group at Upland, various other families scattered across the Los Angeles Basin, and the newly-organized congregation further north at Paso

Minister Jacob Hege wrote a letter to the *Christlicher Bundesbote* praising the region's potential for both health and agricultural purposes.

The first Mennonite congregation in California was the General Conference Mennonite Church-affiliated First Mennonite Church at Paso Robles, started in 1897, a year after the first Mennonites moved to the area from Nebraska and Iowa.

(Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton)





Robles. The vast majority of these people were members of the General Conference Mennonite Church, with much smaller numbers of Mennonite Church and Mennonite Brethren families living mostly in the Los Angeles area. This demographic would change within the next few years, however, as Mennonites moved into an entirely different part of the state.

California's Central Valley had been largely ignored by the Spanish, Mexican, and American settlers until almost the end of the 19th century. The gold rush had brought prospectors to the foothill regions near the valley, but few moved

to the valley floor. Large-scale cattle grazing and wheat farming dominated the area by the mid-19th century, but neither activity brought significant population growth. All that would change with the completion of the Central Pacific Railroad through the valley in the 1870s and the discovery of what irrigation could do for the fertile soil there.

It probably was inevitable that an agrarian people like the Mennonites would be attracted to the Central Valley. The first church members to heed the call were Daniel T. and Barbara Eymann and their family. The Eymanns,

West Coast blazed the trail for merged denomination

By Rich Preheim

California and the rest of the United States' West Coast are geographically and culturally far away from Mennonitism's traditional centers of life and thought. Yet in large part because of that isolation, the region was a pioneer in the development of Mennonite Church USA. Fourteen years ago, Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church members from Arizona and southern California to Washington and Idaho formed the first joint MC-GC area conferences in the United States, providing an important boost to the merger of the two denominations.

The idea of uniting the two bodies had been fermenting ever since programs such as Civilian Public Service and Mennonite Central Committee began introducing members of both denominations to each other during World War II. By the 1960s calls were being heard encouraging the General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church to join. MC-GC relations continued to grow through the 1980s, largely spurred by GC general secretary Vern Preheim, who emphasized merger explorations. Among developments were joint conventions in 1983 and 1989, work on a joint confession of faith, and a growing number of dual-conference congregations. But the 1990s saw progress slow as voices of caution and opposition arose amid the nitty-gritty of bringing the two denominations together.

On the West Coast, however, the merger idea was gaining steam. Physically removed from dominant areas of church concentration, with their historical and social trapping, the distinctions between the Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church were becoming increasingly irrelevant along the Pacific Ocean. The church in southern California,

in particular, was being reinvigorated by waves of immigrants attracted to a faith of peace, justice and discipleship but confused by issues of GC and MC identity. "Why have two denominations if they have the same beliefs?" they asked. Indeed, by 1994, a quarter of the members in the GC-affiliated Pacific District Conference were members of dual-conference congregations started since 1988.¹

So while discussions and debates continued on the denominational level, West Coast Mennonites plunged in and quickly began work on a regional merger. In 1992 delegates from Pacific District and the two MC area conferences, Pacific Coast and Southwest, mandated their conferences be integrated, and a "joint operational understanding" was adopted the following year.

The merger formally took place June 23-26, 1994, as nearly 300 people—double the expected attendance—from the three conferences gathered at First Mennonite Church in Reedley, California. First they voted to dissolve their existing conferences, then reconfigured their three bodies into two, called Pacific Southwest and Pacific Northwest. After years of exploration and seven years before the birth of Mennonite Church USA, GC and MC congregations were finally joined under the same banner.

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¹ "Three Area Conference 'Wind Up and Dissolve' to Form Two New Integrated Groups on West Coast" by J. Lorne Peachey, *Gospel Herald*, July 5, 1994, p. 10.

By the 1960s calls were being heard for the General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church to join.

members of the General Conference Mennonite Church, came to California from Moundridge, Kansas, settling in Upland in 1902. High land prices in southern California caused them to look elsewhere for farming opportunities. Intrigued by promotional claims of the railroads, Daniel Eymann and a few of his sons visited the Central Valley. He purchased land in Reedley, and in 1903 the family moved there, becoming the first known Mennonites to settle in the area.

Eymann had no desire to live without the fellowship of other Mennonites and set out to attract others to the area. He extolled the virtues of Reedley in Mennonite periodicals and traveled east to promote the region in person. Eymann's efforts paid off, as other Mennonites responded to his appeals. By February 1904 there were nine families in Reedley, with the promise of more on the way.¹²

While Eymann focused his promotional efforts on fellow General Conference Mennonite Church members, other Mennonites were attracted to Reedley as well. To this point, the Mennonite Brethren had represented only a small fraction of Mennonites living in California, and they had not yet organized any congregations in the state. Then in June 1905 six families established Reedley Mennonite Brethren Church. The General Conference Mennonite Church members of Reedley followed close behind, organizing First Mennonite Church in June 1906 (though they actually were the second Mennonite church in the city).

For the next few decades, the dominant story of Mennonites in California was the establishment of settlements and congregations in small towns across the Central Valley, with the Mennonite Brethren leading the way. Between 1905 and 1939 they established 12 congregations in the Central Valley. The General Conference Mennonite Church, meanwhile, established settlements in about six locations. Only two of those, however (Reedley and Winton), were still in existence by 1940. The Mennonite Church established four small settlements in the Central Valley: at Corning, Dinuba, Winton, and Porterville. By 1925 all but Winton had ceased to exist. Additionally, the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, organized three congregations (all of which still exist today), and the Krimmer

Mennonite Brethren founded one church at Dinuba (which closed in 1988).

While Mennonites were directing most of their energy to the Central Valley by this time, they had not abandoned the Los Angeles Basin. In 1908 the General Conference Mennonite Church decided to establish a city mission project in Los Angeles. The mission, under the leadership of E. F. Grubb, held its first meetings in 1910. Known as the River Station Mission, it was the first such mission project among Mennonites in California. It was formally organized as a General Conference Mennonite Church in 1915 under the name Whosoever Will Mennonite Church, with a membership of 12.

Though conceived as an evangelistic outreach to working-class residents of Los Angeles, the church also attracted Mennonites who had been living in the area, some since the late 1800s. Over time the focus of the church shifted from inner-city outreach to that of a more traditional Mennonite congregation. The difficulty of maintaining such a church in an increasingly Italian neighborhood caused the congregation to purchase land in a middle-class neighborhood about ten miles south and erect a new building there in 1924 under the name Immanuel Mennonite Church.¹³

The Mennonite Church, meanwhile, was also moving toward an organized presence in the Los Angeles Basin. In 1916 it organized a Sunday school in Pasadena, which in 1917 moved to Los Angeles. Within a short time the project had evolved to a regular mission church, known as the Mennonite Gospel Mission.¹⁴ In 1940 it changed its name to Calvary Mennonite Church.

A team of church members from Southern California lead worship at a session of Mennonite Church USA's Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference. The conference's Southern California congregations in particular epitomize the changing face of the church, with ninety-one percent of the membership of non-European background and eighty percent born outside the United States. Nine languages are spoken throughout Pacific Southwest.

(General Conference Mennonite Church photo by Dave Linscheid)



presence in Los Angeles, establishing a regular Mennonite Brethren congregation in 1924 and a city mission project (eventually known as City Terrace Mission) in 1927.¹⁵ The establishment of Los Angeles Mennonite Brethren Church in 1924 represented the culmination of sporadic efforts that had begun some 20 years earlier. In 1904 Mennonite Brethren members living in the Los Angeles area had begun conducting regular quarterly meetings.¹⁶ Delegates from Los Angeles and Anaheim attended the Mennonite Brethren's Pacific District Conference sessions in 1905 and 1906, and occasional references to groups in the Los Angeles area appear in conference yearbooks over the next several years.

Mennonites have both helped shape California and have been profoundly shaped by it.

With the exception of these congregations in Los Angeles, the story of Mennonites in California from 1905 to about 1940 was dominated by the establishment of rural and small-town congregations across the Central Valley and in a few other places such as Paso Robles and Escondido. That situation changed markedly, however, as the pressures of the Great Depression brought some Mennonites into urban areas beginning in the 1930s. By the early 1940s a few of these groups had grown sufficiently to formally organize congregations. The first of these congregations was started in 1940 by the Mennonite Brethren in San Jose. Mennonites had been living in the area at least since the 1920s, when some moved there to work in agricultural processing plants. By 1925 there were reports of 20 Mennonite Brethren members living in San Jose, but since they had no minister they attended other churches in the area.¹⁷ People tended to come and go in response to seasonal work, but by the late 1930s enough Mennonite Brethren had settled permanently in San Jose to make a congregation feasible.

The Mennonite Brethren presence in Fresno grew more quickly, largely because of its close proximity to the Mennonite population center at Reedley, only about 30 miles away. By the late 1930s a group of Mennonite Brethren members was meeting informally in Fresno, and they organized a congregation in January 1942. Perhaps the best indication of Fresno's growing status within the Mennonite Brethren community was, less than three years later, the establishment of Pacific Bible Institute (today Fresno Pacific University) in the fall of 1944. The

school would serve as a magnet to pull even more church members to the city. The decision to establish the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary there in 1955 would reinforce this trend. By 1980 there were six Mennonite Brethren congregations in the greater Fresno area and one General Conference Mennonite Church congregation.



Rowena and James Lark
(Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen)

Over the next few decades the movement of Mennonites into California's urban areas increased. Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite congregations came into existence in San Francisco, San Diego, and outlying parts of the Los Angeles Basin. Mennonite Brethren congregations were established in the San Fernando Valley, various parts of the San Francisco Bay region, and several major cities in the Central Valley.

The most recent phase in the development of Mennonite congregations in California began in earnest in the 1980s, though its roots lie several decades earlier. During this era Mennonites in California moved toward becoming a truly "multiethnic" church through the creation of numerous congregations serving a variety of cultural and ethnic groups.

Tentative efforts in this direction occurred during the first half of the 20th century in such projects as the River Station Mission and the City Terrace Mennonite Brethren Church, both in Los Angeles. Though River Station later evolved into a more traditional Mennonite congregation, City Terrace remained committed to its multiethnic mission. Founded to evangelize Jews, it eventually evolved into a congregation serving primarily Latinos, which it remains today.

During the 1950s and early 1960s members within the Reedley and Dinuba Mennonite Brethren congregations helped establish several Spanish-language congregations in nearby small towns such as Parlier, Orange Cove, and Orosi. Outreach efforts by students and faculty at Pacific Bible Institute also resulted in the creation of similar congregations in Fresno.¹⁸

A different kind of multicultural church development occurred among Mennonites in Los Angeles. After World War II, Los Angeles underwent a significant demographic shift. Neighborhoods that had formerly been predominantly white became increasingly African-American. Among those white residents who fled to the suburbs were significant numbers of Mennonites. As more of their members took up residence in outlying suburbs, pressure increased for the congregations to move as well. In 1951 Immanuel Mennonite Church, affiliated with the General Conference Mennonite Church, moved to the city of Downey. Los Angeles Mennonite Brethren Church, meanwhile, closed in 1957, the same year that a new Mennonite Brethren congregation was established in the San Fernando Valley to the north. Unlike its counterparts, Mennonite Church-affiliated Calvary Mennonite Church did not close or move but underwent a major shift in focus and identity. The members of Calvary were seriously considering selling their property and relocating when, in 1960, they called as their interim pastor James H. Lark, the first African-American to be ordained in the Mennonite Church. Under his leadership, the congregation agreed to retain the facilities to be used as an outreach to the predominantly African-American residents of the neighborhood. Though a majority of the white members did leave to establish a new congregation in Downey, Calvary Mennonite remained in Los Angeles and today still carries on a ministry within the African-American community there.¹⁹

Beyond these few exceptions, Mennonite churches of California remained predominantly English-speaking and of European cultural background through the late 1970s. That changed significantly beginning in the 1980s with the creation of numerous congregations serving immigrant groups that had

begun moving to urban areas of California. All the main Mennonite groups in California experienced this transformation, and by the beginning of the 21st century, California Mennonites had congregations serving immigrants from numerous countries in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and eastern Europe.²⁰ Currently more than half of the Mennonite Brethren and Mennonite Church USA congregations in California worship in languages other than English or serve a membership primarily of non-European cultural background.

Like California itself, the story of Mennonites in the state has been a multi-faceted one. The lures of California have been many, and Mennonites have found themselves drawn there by almost all of them. Whether seeking wealth through gold or land, hoping to be cured by its climate, leaving the farm for new urban opportunities, or reaching out to new immigrants in an amazingly diverse society, Mennonites have both helped shape California and have been profoundly shaped by it. The result has been a Mennonite story unlike any other in North America. 

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Endnotes

- 1 In addition to Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Brethren members, California is home to about 840 Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (Holdeman), members, 120 Conservative Mennonite Conference members, and about 220 members of smaller conservative groups, according to Mennonite statistician C. Nelson Hostetter.
- 2 Some of these Mennonite gold seekers are mentioned in Willard H. Smith, *Mennonites in Illinois*. Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History, no. 24 (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1983), 61, 63; and the obituary of Joseph Summers, *Herald of Truth* (15 Sep. 1892).
- 3 Cornelius J. Dyck, "In the California Gold Rush," *Mennonite Life* 11 (Jan. 1956), 25-28. (C. J. Dyck, the well-known Mennonite historian, is Johannes Dyck's great-grandson).
- 4 Karl Penner, correspondence from Red Bluff, Calif., *Mennonitische Rundschau* (26 November 1884), 1.
- 5 Vivian Schellenberg, "Gerhard J. Rempel Family" (unpublished manuscript, 1995), 1.
- 6 Jacob Friesen, correspondence from Redding, Calif., *Mennonitische Rundschau* (15 December 1886), 1.
- 7 C. K. P., correspondence from Red Bluff, Calif., *Mennonitische Rundschau* (28 January 1885), 1.
- 8 Gerhard Rempel, correspondence from Redding, Calif., *Mennonitische Rundschau* (18 August 1886), 1.
- 9 "Items of News and Comment," *The Mennonite* (10 Sep. 1908), 1.
- 10 Kevin Enns-Rempel, "The Mennonite Sanitarium at Alta Loma, California: 1914-1923," *California Mennonite Historical Society Bulletin*, no. 25 (November 1991), 1-2, 7-11.
- 11 Lee Price Campbell, "Seventy-five Years on the Shores of the Peaceful Sea: A History of the Pacific District Conference of the General Conference Mennonite Church of North America," (M.A. Thesis, Western Evangelical Seminary, 1973), 81-83.
- 12 H. A. Eymann, correspondence from Reedley, *Christlicher Bundesbote* (7 Apr. 1904), 4.
- 13 For a more detailed account of this mission, see Lois Barrett, *The Vision and the Reality: The Story of Home Missions in the General Conference Mennonite Church* (Newton, Kan.: Faith & Life Press, 1983), 81-85.
- 14 Florence Erisman, correspondence from Pasadena, *Gospel Herald* (4 May 1916), 80; Anna Mae Charles, correspondence from Pasadena, *Gospel Herald* (24 May 1917), 132-133; John P. Bontrager, correspondence from Los Angeles, *Gospel Herald* (1 Jan. 1920), 745.
- 15 A. W. and Margaret Friesen, correspondence from Los Angeles, *Zionsbote* (6 July 1927), 7-8.
- 16 Cornelius and Katharina Nickel, correspondence from Long Beach, *Zionsbote* (19 Oct. 1904), 3.
- 17 B. D. Schultz correspondence from San Jose, *Zionsbote* (9 Dec. 1925), 4.
- 18 Juan F. Martinez, "Reaching Out to Our Neighbors: Hispanic Mennonite Brethren Churches in California," in *75 Years of Fellowship: Pacific District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1912-1987* (Fresno: Pacific District Conference, 1987), 46-56.
- 19 LeRoy Bechler, *The Black Mennonite Church in North America, 1886-1986* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1986), 110-122.
- 20 Jeff Wright, "Mennonites in Southern California: An Interpretive Essay," *California Mennonite Historical Society Bulletin* (no. 36: April 1999), 9-11.

Nelson Litwiller addresses the inaugural Festival of the Holy Spirit, which drew more than 2,000 people to the Goshen (Indiana) College campus in 1972. With Litwiller's leading, the event became an important development in the emergence of the charismatic movement in the Mennonite Church.

(Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen)



Five Degrees of Separation The Azusa Street Revival, Nelson Litwiller, and the Mennonite Charismatic Movement

By Joshua R. Weaver

Pentecostalism today is the fastest growing faction of Christianity in the world. It has more than 580 million practitioners and boasts growth of 19 million adherents annually.¹ Such growth is remarkable considering that the Pentecostal movement has existed for barely a century. There is hardly any part of the world that has not experienced its impact to some degree. Even Mennonites have felt the effects of Pentecostalism and have been influenced by its ideas, in large part because of longtime mission worker Nelson Litwiller (1898-1986). Pentecostalism had a large impact on his spiritual life and theology, producing personal changes that left broader imprints upon the Mennonite Church.²

The birth of modern Pentecostalism as a worldwide movement is attributed to the Azusa Street Revival that began in April 1906 in Los Angeles, California, and continued for seven years. It was centered on the Apostolic Faith Mission on Azusa Street, led by William J. Seymour, a minister from Texas who had been invited to preach in southern California. By the end of the year, approximately 300 to 350 people were gathering regularly for meetings that were characterized by boisterous singing, shouting, and speaking in tongues.³

The Azusa Street Revival owed its rapid growth to a number of factors. First, it ignored conventional boundaries of race, ethnicity, and gender. Preaching a message that espoused religious egalitarianism, the revival won many supporters amongst the city's immigrant communities and poor. Seymour was African-American, the son of former slaves, and the movement's participants came from Los Angeles' white and black communities as well as the area's growing Hispanic community.⁴ The nature of the revival allowed its many adherents to freely intermingle across racial and ethnic boundaries. Additionally, this egalitarian spirit applied equally to women. Many women for the first time found themselves respected as church leaders and appreciated for their insightful spiritual contributions.⁵

Second, while much of the Christian community still viewed God as transcendent, for worshippers at Azusa Street God was clearly immanent. They found evidence all around of God in their presence. Speaking in tongues, miraculous healings, and a pervasive energy that was both transforming and empowering convinced those at the revival that God's Holy Spirit was working among them.⁶ The movement revitalized a waning belief in miracles amid the people and attracted attention from other leaders within the city and nation.

Lastly, those who attended the Azusa Street Revival possessed "divine empowerment [that] was not meant for the sanctuary, but for the street."⁷ Viewing themselves as a church in the end times, they believed that the gift of tongues was endowed not only for their personal worship but also as a mandate for spreading the word of God. Mission work became a focus for the movement. Without a rigid hierarchy or doctrine and with the encouragement of lay leadership, each believer could spread the revival. Azusa Street participants ceased to be mere attendees of church; they instead became vital instruments of the church's work in the world.

It was this evangelistic emphasis that took the revival from Los Angeles to other countries, as expansive networks developed around Azusa Street and quickly spread around the world. Pentecostal writers and editors penned testimonies of what they had seen, self-made missionaries left for other countries without responsibility to an agency, and foreign leaders flocked to Azusa Street and other budding revival centers to experience a blessing in the Spirit. One such center developed in Chicago around William H. Durham, who went to Azusa Street in 1907 and received baptism in the Holy Spirit. Called a "pulpit prodigy," Durham led a revival in Chicago that grew rapidly and attracted many attendees who would later become leaders themselves.⁸ One was Italian immigrant Luigi Francescon. After his experience with Durham in Chicago, he felt called to the mission field of South America. In 1909, Francescon traveled to Argentina, where he worked to initiate the Pentecostal revival among Argentina's Italian immigrant communities.⁹ While

this revival found its home at first among immigrant populations, Pentecostalism in Latin America began to flourish more broadly after World War II, proving to be adaptable and easily contextualized for other countries and cultures.¹⁰ Its decentralized egalitarian structure allowed for strong indigenous leadership instead of creating an imperial sort of denominationalism.¹¹ Additionally, local religious impulses fueled the fire of Pentecostalism, making it a fast-growing indigenous movement. It was this burgeoning movement that drew the attention of missionary Nelson Litwiller in Argentina.

Litwiller was born in St. Agatha, Ontario, in 1898. As he finished high school, he committed himself to the Mennonite Church and began to feel strongly that the Lord was calling him to do mission work. After additional schooling—completing his bachelor of arts degree from Goshen (Ind.) College and receiving a concurrent bachelor of divinity degree from Bethany Theological Seminary in Chicago—Litwiller and his wife, Ada Ramseyer Litwiller, went to Argentina in 1925 with Mennonite Board of Missions (MBM).¹² As a missionary in a predominantly Catholic country, Litwiller was eventually acquainted with and befriended other non-Catholic missionaries, including Pentecostals. At first he rejected the style of Christianity that Pentecostals espoused as overly emotional, and he felt that their emphasis on spiritual baptism gave them an attitude of spiritual superiority.¹³ As he continued to interact with Pentecostals, however, Litwiller came to admit that they were doing good work, and he "couldn't help but marvel at their extraordinary growth throughout South America as well as in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and Peru."¹⁴

During his four-decade tenure as a missionary, Litwiller was ordained a bishop, served as field secretary for MBM for all of South America, and helped to found the Mennonite Theological Seminary in Montevideo, Uruguay, where he was president for ten years.¹⁵ Despite what many would call a successful career of ministry, Litwiller retired from the field feeling unfulfilled. After returning to North America in 1967 and settling in Goshen, Ind., he became increasingly frustrated and distressed about

Litwiller came to admit the Pentecostals were doing good work, and he 'couldn't help but marvel at their extraordinary growth throughout South America.'



Litwiller worked to defuse the explosive elements of the charismatic movement and contextualize it in a way that Mennonites could relate to.

what he saw as a church on the edge of collapse. Mennonites, he thought, were overwhelmed by materialism, formality, indifference, and a lack of brotherly love.¹⁶ Their absence of unity had proven detrimental to their expansion. Although he had originally encouraged other missionaries and churchgoers to get their eyes off results and told them a “sense of accomplishment should come not from numbers of converts but from that knowledge that you were doing God’s will,” he believed retrospectively that his own mission work was a relative failure when contrasted with the Pentecostal success in South America.¹⁷ He was afraid that the church he had devoted his entire life to would not endure.

With this fear weighing upon his mind, Litwiller became interested in the Holy Spirit as he sought to uncover the nature of Pentecostalism’s appeal. The more he dwelled upon his perceived ineffectiveness in missions and ministry, the more convinced he became that Pentecostals had something significant to offer. In 1969 Litwiller praised their attention to evangelism and observed how each member was called to spread the ministry. Contrasting the differences, he noted that the Mennonite Church’s witness “is left to the professional ministers, with the result that the church is stationary. But every Pentecostalist is an evangelist, and the church grows.”¹⁸ Litwiller thus called for a renewal of Mennonite leadership and evangelism that would empower believers in ministry and speak good news to the poor and dispossessed. In making such a demand of Mennonite leadership, however, he quickly realized that his position as bishop could make him an agent of renewal. After consulting with colleagues in Goshen, Litwiller was advised to meet with Kevin Ranaghan, a former student of John Howard Yoder’s at the nearby University of Notre Dame and a leader of the emerging Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement.¹⁹ After attending some prayer meetings during the summer of 1970 and speaking with Ranaghan, Litwiller realized that a charismatic renewal could benefit the Mennonite Church as well. As the Catholic group had shown, it was a way to maintain Mennonite denominational particularities while embracing the spiritual elements of Pentecostalism that Litwiller credited as a source of energy and empowerment.

Still working short-term projects with MBM, Litwiller was scheduled to leave for Europe toward the end of summer 1970 to help coach and advise missionaries in Spain. He decided that, if ever there were an opportune time for personal renewal, this was it. Litwiller determined that he would not go to Spain preaching the same old messages but would rather go proclaiming the need for evangelism and the benefits of spiritual renewal. Merely ten days before departure, in a meeting with Ranaghan and his prayer group, Litwiller asked that the group pray for him to receive a spiritual renewal.²⁰ On that night Litwiller had an experience that included speaking in tongues and became an apostle of “baptism in the Holy Spirit to the Mennonite world.”²¹ He left for Europe with a renewed call to ministry and a revitalized hope for the Mennonite Church. From that moment forward, Nelson Litwiller lived as an itinerant minister preaching a message of charismatic renewal wherever he went.

This renewal, as he taught, centered on two foci. The first was internal, to enact positive change and restore unity within the Mennonite Church. As a bishop in the church, Litwiller was in a unique position to advocate charismatic renewal without having it quashed by an unwilling hierarchy. While the renewal proved divisive in some circles, Litwiller’s gentle leadership and genuine pursuit of harmony lent credibility to his efforts. He actively worked to defuse the explosive elements of the charismatic movement that proved problematic for others and contextualize it in a way that Mennonites could relate to.

While some charismatic Christians in other denominations were quick to form splinter groups apart from their home churches, Litwiller felt that such a decision reflected a misunderstanding of the purpose of the Spirit. Only people could polarize the church; the Spirit did not. Rather, the Spirit sought to unite Christians, reconcile problems and transgressions, and restore the body of Christ.²² Nelson broke with Pentecostals and other charismatic groups in his instruction to Mennonite charismatics. He taught that all members who were baptized with water were concurrently baptized in the Holy

Spirit. Many Pentecostals viewed these two aspects of baptism independently and probably not often chronologically coincidental. Litwiller, however, thought that the Holy Spirit was made manifest in different ways for different people and that all were able to live a renewed life of spiritual empowerment. His teaching about the end times was also different from that of the Pentecostals. Litwiller considered the Pentecostal tendency toward premillennialism a terrible misjudgment. He found it unfortunate that many people believe God reigns in heaven while awaiting the rapture for God to begin work on Earth.

Litwiller argued that "nothing has so paralyzed the purposes of God on earth" as the belief that God's activity on Earth is delayed until the advent of "His Kingdom in a time-space world."²³

The charismatic movement was also a tool that could unite Mennonites and resuscitate its members for worship. Litwiller believed that while the early Anabaptist movement had emphasized the immediacy of the Spirit in worship, contemporary Mennonitism had decayed into a "lifeless institutionalism" unable to fulfill the spiritual needs of its members and congregations.²⁴ Litwiller worked hard to remedy this problem. In 1972 he provided impetus and leadership for a "Festival of the Holy Spirit" at Goshen College, which drew more than 2,000 people and had a spiritual impact on the Goshen College student body as well as the broader Mennonite Church.²⁵ In this venue Litwiller called for healing the divisions in the Mennonite and broader Christian body and greater openness toward the Spirit that would allow Mennonites to thrive and grow. With continuing charismatic growth among Mennonites, Litwiller in 1975 helped found Mennonite Renewal Services (MRS). For 20 years MRS sought to help empower churches with spiritual vitality and worked to prevent the charismatic movement from causing congregational strife. MRS maintained that leaving one's congregation was not a viable



option, that Christians must be in a community of believers. For a lone Christian set against the congregation no body exists, and he or she cannot fully experience God.²⁶ MRS created a community for charismatics that operated within the church, helping to both retain members and bring more into the fold.

Litwiller's second focus looked beyond the Mennonites to opportunities in ecumenism and missions. He took very seriously Christ's prayer in John 17. Litwiller asked, "What is the nature of the unity for which Christ prayed when he prayed that they may all be one?"²⁷ He translated John 17:21 into an ecumenical challenge for Mennonites and Christians. Having been influenced greatly by Pentecostals and Catholics in his life, he knew that diverse Christian denominations had significant insights that should be shared. Although the global church was largely fragmented, Christians should not assume that it was destined to remain so or that fragmentation was God's particular intention.²⁸ Bearing this in mind, Litwiller often sought opportunities to engage other denominations. One of the hallmarks of this effort was the Conference on Charismatic Renewal in the Christian Churches in 1977. Litwiller chaired Mennonite participation in this ecumenical gathering, which drew more than 50,000 participants from dozens of denominations.²⁹

Nelson Litwiller (standing second from left) and other clergy ordain four new Mennonite ministers in an Argentinian congregation in 1951. Litwiller spent four years as a mission worker in the country, where he was introduced to the California-born charismatic movement.

(Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen)

Litwiller's message of renewal was also greatly intended for mission work. He concluded that his perceived failure in missions was due to a deficient Mennonite theology that did not attend to personal spiritual needs.³⁰ In hindsight Litwiller thought that a theological embrace of the Holy Spirit would have revived an evangelistic zeal and caused the Mennonite Church to flourish. Charismatic renewal, he felt, provided a functional spirituality for mission work that would sustain and enlarge the Mennonite Church. In order to be relevant, however, this newfound spirituality must be paired with Mennonite social concerns of peace and justice.³¹ For Litwiller, evangelism and social action were one. Paired together, they strengthened the message of the church and gave all members, despite class or ethnicity, egalitarian footing. Preaching this holistic renewal in foreign mission fields, Litwiller and other charismatic Mennonite leaders strengthened Mennonite missionaries and churches abroad. Even in Argentina, where Litwiller had thought he had failed, missionaries were moved by the charismatic movement, and the churches experienced growth in outreach and discipleship.³²

In an indirect way the Azusa Street Revival and Pentecostalism have had lasting influence on the Mennonite Church. *Mennonite Encyclopedia* states that in 1986 within the Mennonite Church 25 to 30 percent of pastors and 10 to 15 percent of members called themselves charismatic.³³ In missions, Nelson Litwiller's vision was made into the norm. This is reflected in the Mennonite Board of Missions motto, "The Whole Gospel for a Broken World," which embraced the twofold nature of missions: "ministry to human need and proclamation about a transforming relationship with Jesus Christ."³⁴ In worship, many Mennonite congregations have opened themselves up to more charismatic styles of music and praise. While some aspects of the charismatic movement may have faded, its impact remains visible in the Mennonite Church. 

Joshua R. Weaver is a native of Bluffton, Ohio, and a 2006 graduate of Goshen (Indiana) College. This fall he is starting a term of service with Mennonite Central Committee's SALT program in Jordan.

Endnotes

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- 2 This article deals only with Pentecostal influences in the context of the Mennonite Church and not the General Conference Mennonite Church or Mennonite Church USA.
- 3 C. M. Robeck Jr., "Azusa Street Revival," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess, Gary B. McGee, and Patrick H. Alexander (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 33.
- 4 McClung, "Pentecostals," 32; Douglas Petersen, "The Azusa Street Mission and Latin American Pentecostalism," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30, no. 4 (April 2006), 66.
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- 13 Nelson Litwiller, "Revitalized Retirement," in *My Personal Pentecost*, eds. Roy and Martha Koch, 106-117 (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1977), 110.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid., 109-110.
- 16 Ibid., 111.
- 17 Nelson Litwiller, from a sermon titled "The Jesus Person and Witnessing," found in the Nelson and Ada (Ramseyer) Litwiller Collection, Hist. MSS. 1-105, Box 9, File 67, which is entitled 'Evangelism,' Mennonite Church USA Archives, Goshen, Indiana (MCA-G).
- 18 Nelson Litwiller, from an unpublished paper titled "Types of Evangelism or Methods" (December 1969), 15, found in the Nelson and Ada (Ramseyer) Litwiller Collection, Hist. MSS. 1-105, Box 9, File 67, which is entitled 'Evangelism,' MCA-G.
- 19 Litwiller, "Revitalized Retirement," 113. Embracing the spiritual elements of Pentecostalism without withdrawing from denominational affiliations, the Charismatic Movement emerged in the late 1950s and became popular in the 1960s and 1970s.
- 20 Ibid., 115.
- 21 Kevin Ranaghan, interview with the author, 28 March 2006.
- 22 Nelson Litwiller, on the reverse side of a letter to Harold Gingerich, dated 20 October 1977 and found in the Nelson and Ada (Ramseyer) Litwiller Collection, Hist. MSS. 1-105, Box 9, File 22, which is entitled 'Whole Life Crusades, Inc. Correspondence 1974-79,' MCA-G.
- 23 Nelson Litwiller, from a sermon entitled "Charismatic Charter," found in the Nelson and Ada (Ramseyer) Litwiller Collection, Hist. MSS. 1-105, Box 9, File 40, which is entitled 'Charismatic Charter,' MCA-G.
- 24 Nelson Litwiller, from a sermon entitled "Living in the Power of the Spirit," p. 1, found in the Nelson and Ada (Ramseyer) Litwiller Collection, Hist. MSS. 1-105, Box 10, File 10, which is entitled 'The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church,' MCA-G.
- 25 Dave Kroeker, "Festival of the Holy Spirit: A Pentecost experience at Goshen College," *Mennonite Reporter*, Monday, 29 May 1972, 14, from the Nelson and Ada (Ramseyer) Litwiller Collection, Hist. MSS. 1-105, Box 9, File 4, which is entitled 'Festival of the Holy Spirit, Goshen, IN,' MCA-G.
- 26 Nelson Litwiller, "Forum: Charismatics in the Congregation," conducted by Harold Gingerich; involving Harold E. Bauman, Nelson Litwiller, and R. Herbert Minnich, *Empowered* (Spring 1983), 2.
- 27 Nelson Litwiller, quoted from a letter addressed to "Brethren Gathered at Youngstown," 24 October 1975, found in the Nelson and Ada (Ramseyer) Litwiller Collection, Hist. MSS. 1-105, Box 9, File 11, which is entitled 'Mennonite Renewal Services correspondence 1975-77,' MCA-G. Many other documents and sermons of Nelson Litwiller contain references to the same scripture, John 17:21, asking that "they may all be one."
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- 31 Nelson Litwiller, from an unpublished paper entitled "Evangelism," 24 December 1969, p. 3, from the Nelson and Ada (Ramseyer) Litwiller Collection, Hist. MSS. 1-105, Box 9, File 67, which is entitled 'Evangelism,' MCA-G.
- 32 Lawrence H. Greaser, "Latin American Administrative Trip Report," 7 September-10 October 1974, p. 6, from

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33 Harold E. Bauman, "Charismatic Movement," *Mennonite Encyclopedia Vol. V* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1990), 134-36. These estimates came from a survey distributed to one in every three MC congregations. J. Howard Kauffman seemingly confirms this statistic with the results from his sociological study: J. Howard Kauffman, "Mennonite Charismatics: Are They Any Different," *Mennonite Quarterly Review (MQR)* 70, no. 4 (Oct. 1996), 458, footnote 3.

34 Stanley W. Green, MBM president, *Missions Now* (Fall 1997), 2.



A group of musicians lead worship at the first Festival of the Holy Spirit, held on the Goshen (Indiana) College campus in 1972. (Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen)

New Historical Committee director named

Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership announces Rich Preheim of Elkhart, Indiana, has been appointed director of the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee. He has been interim director for the Historical Committee on a part-time basis since October 2006 and will begin work as full-time director Sept. 1, based in the Goshen (Indiana) Archives.

"Our work is especially important right now as we continue to forge our identity as Mennonite Church USA and as worldly dynamics continue to challenge our identity and our beliefs," Preheim says. "Our present and future are unquestionably and dramatically shaped by the past, and we ignore that at our own peril."

Preheim graduated from Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas, in 1989 with a bachelor's degree in history and minors in communication and Bible and

religion. He received a master's degree in journalism from Indiana University in 1992. Preheim also has studied at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana. He is a contributing editor to *Mennonite Life* and the recipient of a Mennonite Historical Society research grant.

Preheim is in the process of completing a book on the history of Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference. He began the project while working as a freelance writer for more than three years. He previously served 12 years on the staffs of *Mennonite Weekly Review* and *The Mennonite*. Preheim's byline also has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Christian Century*, *Sojourners*, and *Washington Post*, among others.

Preheim is a member of Hively Avenue Mennonite Church in Elkhart and has also lived in South Dakota, Kansas, and Pennsylvania. In addition, Preheim is familiar with

the broader Mennonite church's diversity, having visited Mennonite churches and sites across the United States and in Canada, Europe, and Latin America.

"As someone who adamantly believes in the importance of Mennonite witness, I want to contribute to our pursuit of faithfulness by lifting up history," Preheim says.

He believes part of that faithfulness is accurately understanding Mennonite Church USA's past as the former Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church. He says the Historical Committee is "in a prime position to foster understandings and address historical stereotypes and misperceptions between those groups."

"While we learn from the past, we have to be vigilant to learn correctly and honestly about each other," Preheim says.

Paying attention

Our Mennonite Church USA sisters and brothers on the West Coast justifiably complain that much of the rest of the church acts as if the denomination stops at the Rocky Mountains. With a lack of major historic areas of Mennonite concentration and of church institutions, that region (and others) can unfortunately disappear in the light of places such as south central Kansas, northern Indiana, and Virginia's Shenandoah Valley.

So it was good to have the recent Mennonite Church USA convention in San Jose, Calif., show what that part of the church in that part of the world is like now and what the entire national and global fellowship is becoming: multicultural, multiethnic, and urban with a myriad of expressions of faithfulness.

With the denomination's attention turned to the West Coast, it is also time to also take a historical look at a part of the church that has emerged as vanguard of 21st-century Mennonitism. Regrettably, the historical community has seemingly ignored the region even worse than Mennonite Church USA as a whole. Consider the record of the three main U.S. churchwide historical periodicals, as reflected in their indexes:

- This issue of *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* includes the first articles about California in the magazine's 68-year existence. *MHB* has published one article each on Mennonites in Idaho and on the former Pacific Coast Conference of the Mennonite Church, plus four about Arizona.
- Since it first appeared in 1926, *Mennonite Quarterly Review* has published one article about Mennonites in Oregon but nothing else about

the church in the region now covered by Pacific Southwest and Pacific Northwest conferences. An article on southern California is scheduled to come out in the July issue.

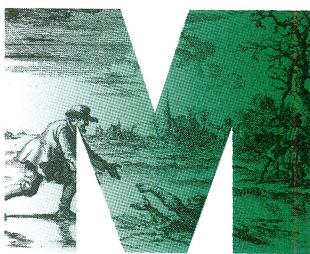
- Although the competition is obviously lacking, *Mennonite Life*, founded in 1946, can boast the most interest in West Coast Mennonites, having run ten articles on California (including three on the fruit industry), two on Washington, and one on Idaho.

To be sure, there are many facets of the church that have been overlooked, be they geographic, ethnic, cultural, gender, or theological—or any combination of thereof. As the San Jose convention reminds us of who are and where we are going, may it also lead us to be vigilant in exploring and understanding where some of us are coming from in our increasingly diverse church.



On a personal note, this my first issue of *MHB* since being named permanent director of the Historical Committee in May. I had been interim director since October 2006, and it greatly whetted my appetite. I am excited about the Historical Committee's potential to use our heritage to nurture Mennonite Church USA's faith and identity. This venture, however, is a partnership with you, so please don't hesitate to contact me with comments and critiques. Your counsel, support, and prayers remain essential as the Historical Committee continues to strive to preserve our heritage, interpret our faith stories, and proclaim God's work among us.

—Rich Preheim



Mennonite Historical Bulletin

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What About Racial Intermarriage?

"What Do You ?

IN our race-conscious society, this is to be the question. . . .

Do You Want Your Daughter to Marry a Negro?



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Mennonite
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Vol. LXVIII
October 2007
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On the cutting edge

How the marriage of an African-American man and a white woman challenged the church's attitudes on race

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October 28

Help all the nations, near and far,
Awake, Thy glory see;
Behold the bright and morning star,
The Christ of Calvary!



On the cover: Against a backdrop of articles from Mennonite periodicals, newly married Gerald and Annabelle Conrad Hughes cut the cake on their wedding day, November 21, 1954, at Oak Grove Mennonite Church, Smithville, Ohio.

Laws of attraction vs. sentiments of separation

One couple met, fell in love, married—and shed light on the church's racism

By Tobin Miller Shearer

f

Annabelle and Gerald Hughes thought the worst was over. The pastor at Oak Grove Mennonite Church in Smithville, Ohio, had supported their interracial marriage on November 21, 1954, despite objections from members of the all-white congregation. Annabelle and Gerald had found a replacement for the men's quartet member who withdrew because of concerns about their union. The congregational business meeting held to discuss whether they could be married on church property had gone in their favor. College friends, interested observers, and a returning missionary with no previous connection to the couple joined the wedding celebration and more than made up for those who stayed away.¹ Annabelle and Gerald's ceremony took place without visible disruption.

The disruption came several days later. There was no honeymoon to follow the wedding. Instead, Gerald returned to his assignment at Hawthorne State Hospital outside Cleveland, Ohio, where he was serving his alternative military assignment. As the only African-American Mennonite assigned to the hospital, Gerald had worked hard to build relationships with the other alternative service men. Several had traveled to Smithville for his and Annabelle's wedding. As the newlyweds traveled the 50 miles back to Hawthorne from Smithville, they anticipated being able to live in their own apartment on the hospital grounds. Annabelle had been promised a job at the hospital as well. Soon after their arrival, however, hospital administrators dismissed Gerald without explanation. Only later did he discover that a leader from Ohio Mennonite Conference had contacted the Hawthorne administrators to protest their support of an interracial couple. Although no Ohio state laws prohibited interracial marriage at that time, the church leader's objections carried the day despite strong support from the other alternative service workers and national church administrators. The couple returned to Annabelle's mother's home until Gerald received word that he could serve the remainder of his term at Gladstone Mennonite Church in Cleveland where he and Annabelle began dating.²



Thirteen years later Annabelle and Gerald's names again garnered the attention of church leaders. On August 28, 1967, influential Mennonite Church leader Guy F. Hershberger nominated Gerald and three other men for service on the Mennonite Church's Committee for Peace and Social Concerns. Annabelle's name also appeared with Gerald's in Hershberger's nomination. Although Hershberger described the pedigree of all four men in terms of their church involvements

and commitment to racial justice, he identified the nominees' wives only in the case of Gerald and a second African American, Curtis Burrell. Hershberger wrote, "Gerald Hughes... Married to Anabelle [sic] Conrad (white)."³ Just over a decade after Gerald's dismissal from Hawthorne, church leaders sought out Gerald because he had married a white woman. The position of an African-American man married into the white Mennonite community had dramatically changed.

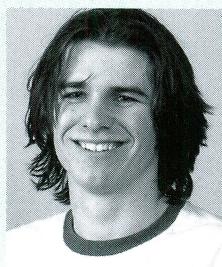
History essay contest winners announced

GOSHEN, Ind. – Interracial marriage and a German mythologist and nationalist were the subjects of the winning entries in this year's John Horsch Mennonite History Essay Contest, sponsored by the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee. They are excerpted in this issue of *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*.



Tobin Miller Shearer

"Looking Past Legality: Interracial Marriage and the Mennonite Church, 1930-1971" by Tobin Miller Shearer took first place in the graduate/seminary category. A doctoral student at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., Shearer used the 1954 wedding and marriage of Gerald Hughes, an African-American, and Annabelle Conrad, a white, to examine denominational attitudes toward the most intimate of interpersonal relations even while advocating for racial equality.



Braden Hiebner

Second place went to Joshua Weaver, a student at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., for his paper "Awakening to the Realities of Conflict: Mennonite Board of Missions in Israel." Holly Scott from Penn State University at Harrisburg was awarded third place for "Doves of a Different Feather: Mennonites and the Antiwar Movement During Vietnam."

In the undergraduate category, Braden Hiebner from Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., took the top prize for "Reintegrating the Life of Wilhelm Mannhardt: A Nineteenth-Century Mennonite, Mythologist, Nationalist, Pietist, and Liberal."

Robert Weaver, also from Bethel College, was second with "Urban Kansas Mennonites and Homosexuality, 1968-1999." Nathan Kruger from the University of Waterloo (Ont.) was third with "The Immigration and Settlement of Susanna and Isaak Zacharias: A Contextual Analysis of Their Experience in Canada."

No first-place award was given in the high school category. Melanie Kampen from Westgate Mennonite Collegiate in Winnipeg, Man., earned second place for "Reasons for the Migration of Mennonites: Russia to Canada, 1870s."

First-place winners each received \$100 and a year's subscription to *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. Seventy-five dollars was awarded to second place and \$50 to third place. All entrants received a one-year subscription to *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*. Ten students submitted entries to this year's contest.

Judges were Lee Roy Berry, political science professor at Goshen (Ind.) College; Rachel Waltner Goossen, history professor at Washburn University in Topeka, Kan.; and Walter Sawatsky, professor of church history and mission at AMBS.

The annual contest is named in honor of John Horsch (1867-1941), the German-American historian and polemicist who did much to rekindle interest in Anabaptist and Mennonite studies in the 20th century.

The white church leaders who expressed interest in Gerald contradicted earlier church claims. From the late nineteenth century forward, Mennonite authors both supported racial equality and opposed interracial marriage, usually without specific scriptural reference. In 1889, Abram B. Kolb, assistant editor of the Mennonite Church periodical *Herald of Truth*, expressed his opposition to interracial marriage "for many reasons," none of them scriptural, while also maintaining that people of all racial groups should "be equal and enjoy the same" God-given privileges.⁴ More than thirty years later, in 1924, Virginia Mennonite Conference took a similar position when it accepted African Americans as members but opposed "close social relationships" and "marrying between the colored and white races."⁵ In the 1930s, Mennonite authors argued against mixed marriages by noting that interracial partners came from "entirely different race stock, habits and ways of thinking" and their children inherited "the worst qualities of their parents."⁶ Rather than scriptural arguments, authors in these years accepted the stated scientific assumption that interbreeding between races would result in "foolish" and "backward" offspring.⁷ In 1943 church statesman Daniel Kauffman opposed birth control for white people because it could lead to "race suicide" and being "overwhelmed" by "hordes of colored (and renegade white) races."⁸ He did not need to mention interracial marriage in light of his lament over the lack of white babies. Between 1950 and 1955 alone, five authors had opposed interracial marriage while supporting racial equality.⁹ By the time Hershberger nominated Gerald based on his marriage to Annabelle, however, a change had taken place. Rather than threatening the church, black men who married white women provided white church leaders with the means to counter a growing perception that the Mennonite community lacked integrity in its professed support of racial equality.



In the early 1940s Gerald and his three brothers relocated from their native Philadelphia to Andrews Bridge, Pennsylvania. Gerald's parents separated when he was about ten

years old, and the Hughes brothers joined the Thompson household in southern Lancaster County, where members of the white Mellingers Mennonite congregation had held services since 1938.¹⁰ As he worshipped with the conservatively dressed Mennonites and eventually joined the fledgling Andrews Bridge congregation, Gerald's singing ability quickly gained attention. By 1948, eighteen-year-old Gerald had begun to lead songs at Lancaster Mennonite Conference gatherings of the Colored Workers Committee.¹¹ Gerald had found a new home among the Mennonites.

As World War II came to an end and Nazi atrocities against Europe's Jews became public, white Mennonites focused on "Negro Missions" as the solution to the "sin" of racial discrimination.¹² Gerald and his brothers became ever more involved in a church that claimed unity of the human race as expressed in "one blood" and opposed "any practices which are based on an assumption of white superiority," even while acknowledging that young white Mennonite men in rural communities sometimes harassed African-American pedestrians.¹³ Amid such universal claims and prejudicial practice, Gerald worshipped with church leaders who had not yet considered that their evangelistic efforts might lead to interracial marriage.

The absence of attention to interracial marriage during the latter half of the 1940s comes as no surprise. Mennonites during this period placed great doctrinal weight on marrying within the faith community. From the turn of the century forward, Mennonite confessions of faith supported only believers' unions.¹⁴ On through the twentieth century, confessional statements and Mennonite authors also opposed Catholic-Protestant and interdenominational marriages.¹⁵ During a time of felt persecution for nonresistant belief, the prohibition against interfaith marriages kept young white Mennonites marrying within the family. As a result, Mennonite leaders offered scant commentary on interracial marriage. Even as Gerald traveled to Goshen College in northern Indiana in 1949 to study music education and live with more white Mennonites, the threat of African-American men marrying white Mennonite women seemed distant and worthy of only the most minimal concern.

Rather than scriptural arguments, authors [in the 1930s,] accepted the stated scientific assumption that interbreeding ... would result in "foolish" and "backward" offspring.



Annabelle and Gerald first crossed paths in 1950, when Annabelle, from Smithville, Ohio, attended Goshen College for one year. Although they did not begin dating at that time, the two young people came into contact again in the summer of 1951, when Gerald moved to Cleveland, Ohio, in hopes of working in the steel industry and serving Gladstone Mennonite Church during the evenings and weekends. Annabelle had accepted an assignment with the church as a voluntary service worker prior to Gerald's arrival. Due to a strike, however, Gerald ended up working for the Mennonite mission board as a staff person at Gladstone. After Annabelle completed her voluntary service assignment, she stayed to support the Gladstone ministry while working in the offices of a local manufacturing company. In the pages of *Gospel Herald*, the Mennonite Church magazine, Annabelle avidly recruited young people to join her at Gladstone.¹⁶ Although Gerald returned to Goshen College during the school year, he served as leader of the church's voluntary service unit during the summers of 1952 and 1953.¹⁷ Annabelle and Gerald's courtship had begun.



Within the African-American neighborhood church workers and community residents alike offered their support to Annabelle and Gerald.

The couple's mutual interest developed at a time when church leaders continued to oppose such interracial attraction. In early 1951, for example, Esko Loewen, editor of the youth section of the General Conference Mennonite Church magazine *The Mennonite*, cautioned against racial intermarriage because it "is not generally wise" due to "many barriers to be hurdled."¹⁸ Even though he also chided church leaders for promoting racial inclusiveness even while practicing racial prejudice, his opposition to interracial marriage remained. Like Abram Kolb in 1889, Loewen replicated a familiar sequence: support for racial inclusion based on scriptural mandate followed by caution against interracial marriage based on social convention. Other church leaders mounted even stronger social arguments. That same year, John R. Mumaw, president of Eastern Mennonite College in Virginia, declared without appeal to scripture his opposition to interracial marriage at a churchwide conference.¹⁹ Writing several months later, Mary Toews, a missionary with ten years' experience "working side by side

with the African," passionately objected to the idea of interracial marriage without giving the slightest nod toward the biblical text. Writing in *The Mennonite*, she asked, "What has the colored family to contribute to my happy married life? One marries the family, Granny, Aunt Jemima and all." Toews also stressed that children of interracial unions should, like all Africans and African Americans, keep with "others of like skin and custom." Toews concluded that a white mother of a dark-skinned child would find her offspring so "strange" that she would then "divorce" her child.²⁰ Despite subsequent efforts by editors at *The Mennonite* to distance themselves from her article, Toews took a position substantively similar to other Mennonite authors in the early 1950s.²¹ Like Loewen and Mumaw, she favored equality for the African-American community while opposing interracial marriage. She simply delineated her opposition while trafficking in stereotypes eschewed by more cautious authors. Such critique did not bode well for Annabelle and Gerald's growing attraction.

The young people's courtship did receive support from some of those involved in interracial ministry, however. Within the African-American neighborhood where Gladstone members ministered, church workers and community residents alike offered their support to Annabelle and Gerald. As they made community visits, distributed evangelism tracts, and handed out church bulletins, Annabelle and Gerald encountered no local opposition. Nationally, a white author associated with the integrated Woodlawn Mennonite congregation in Chicago expressed his support for couples like Annabelle and Gerald.²² Just over a month after Toews' article appeared, William Keeney wrote in *The Mennonite* an article that, for the first time in the Mennonite church's publication history, supported interracial marriages without reservation. Rather than withdraw from interracial contact for fear of negative reprisals, Keeney maintained that Christians should challenge the prejudicial attitudes that led to such fears. He wrote that those who opposed interracial marriage due to society's racism sinned by discriminating. Quoting Colossians 3:9-11, Keeney also called Mennonites to become color blind and so transcend the

divisions of Jew and Greek, circumcised and uncircumcised, citizen and slave. Even more strikingly, Keeney brought core doctrine to bear by stating that some may be called to the “life of suffering love by intermarriage.”²³ Mennonites committed to nonresistance and patient love could not ignore such commentary.

Other white Mennonite workers at African-American mission sites offered far less support. From his station in Philadelphia, Luke G. Stoltzfus took up the question “Is Christianity Good for Race Relations?” in July 1952. After arguing strongly for congregational integration, racial equality, and just treatment of all people, Stoltzfus asserted that African Americans’ interest in marrying white people decreased as racial equality increased.²⁴ Four months later another author queried, “Would you like for your daughter to marry a Negro?” Like Stoltzfus, this author first claimed that African Americans lost interest in marrying white people when their economic and social situations improved. He then concluded that, despite those few individuals who married outside their group, fears about intermarriage were “imaginary.”²⁵ By the end of 1952, however, Annabelle and Gerald had begun to show enough interest in each other that the prospect of their union became quite real.



The couple took their relationship to a new level by announcing to their families that they planned to marry in the fall of 1954. Despite exposure to decades of written opposition to interracial marriage in Mennonite church sources, Annabelle’s only living parent, her mother, Sadie Conrad, welcomed Gerald without concern. She had met Gerald during a previous summer when she lived with and cooked for the voluntary service workers in Cleveland and, according to Annabelle, “liked Gerald” because of his education and interest in teaching. Early on, Sadie affirmed her daughter for doing something that she “couldn’t do.”²⁶ Gerald’s family likewise supported his relationship with Annabelle and expressed no opposition. Later on, two of his brothers also married women from other racial groups. Although some of Annabelle’s relatives did express initial reservations, Gerald won them over through conversation and, in one instance, the shared task of cutting wood “with a crosscut saw.”²⁷ The more trenchant opposition they encountered came from the church at large, not from within their families.

Annabelle and Gerald enjoyed their wedding despite the controversy that preceded it. Annabelle’s home congregation met separately and without the couple’s knowledge to vote on whether they could be married in the church building. With the support of their pastor, the ceremony went forward as planned.



Gerald Hughes (second row, fifth from right, in a dark suit and tie) poses with other participants at a 1959 conference on race relations held at Woodlawn Mennonite Church in Chicago.

(Gospel Herald)



Gerald and Annabelle Hughes

Although some refused to take part in preparing the wedding meal and others voiced their disapproval, still other church members volunteered to prepare food for the reception and bless the union.²⁸ A large crowd gathered to witness Annabelle and Gerald exchange vows on November 21, 1954. The couple felt far more supported and encouraged by those who came to wish them well than discouraged by those who criticized their relationship.²⁹

The large turnout and attendant controversy does not surprise, given that the wedding took place only six months after the Supreme Court's May 17, 1954, *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision. Following *Brown*, a flurry of articles, all written by white men, took up the problem of racial prejudice in the church and attempted to present theological arguments for racial equality and inclusion.³⁰ Although no one articulated a new position on interracial marriage, the issue remained current. For example, a group of Mennonite students participating in a Chicago-based study program on industry discussed whether "intermarriage" was a solution to "the race problem."³¹



Annabelle and Gerald first gained attention as church leaders decided how to respond to Hawthorne administrators' decision to fire Gerald. After deciding not to invite the local Congress on Racial Equality to advocate on their behalf, Annabelle and Gerald returned to the Conrad homestead in Smithville to await the decision of mission board executives and Selective Service personnel. Shortly thereafter, the couple received word that Gerald had been transferred to the Gladstone congregation. Annabelle and Gerald gladly returned to the congregation that had brought them together.³² They would never again leave.

From their base at Gladstone, the newlyweds began to participate in the life of the broader church. In a year that began with yet another

white Mennonite editor raising social objections against interracial marriage, Annabelle and Gerald took part in a conference that would come to define the church's official position on interracial marriage.³³ From April 22 to 24, 1955, they joined more than 100 church leaders and congregants on the campus of Goshen College for a meeting planned by the Mennonite Church's Committee on Economic and Social Relations. The Hugheses and other conference goers listened to conference organizer Guy F. Hershberger and committee chair H. Ralph Hernley raise the topic of interracial marriage in their introduction to the assembly proceedings. The two men said that mutual acquaintance and brotherhood across racial lines could lead to "the bogey of intermarriage" losing "its meaning."³⁴ Conference planners did not, however, leave participants with only this assurance. Annabelle and Gerald also listened to a lengthy and exhaustive exegesis of key Old Testament and New Testament passages by Goshen College professor C. Norman Kraus, who explained how Moses married outside his group and did not break any biblical commands by doing so.³⁵ Kraus's call for unity based on the Pauline texts likewise addressed concerns about the mixing of the races.³⁶ Through his presentation, he brought specific scriptural texts into a conversation that had long been dominated by social arguments.

In addition to listening to speakers discuss a theological concern they embodied, Annabelle and Gerald also heard an official report about their wedding. Although he did not mention their names, conference attendant D. Richard Miller from Smithville, Ohio, supplied sufficient detail to make clear he spoke about Annabelle and Gerald. In his report about "the incident which has attracted the most attention" in his area, Miller identified the Hugheses' congregation, the debate over whether to allow them to marry in the Oak Grove church building, and that they attended Gladstone.³⁷ Miller closed his report by mentioning that Gerald had led music at Oak Grove Mennonite Church following their wedding but that many members continued to express concern about "the welfare of the couple and the problems which confront them and will confront them as they take their place in society."³⁸ If Annabelle and Gerald had not previously captured the

attention of the participants at the Goshen conference, they certainly had done so by the end of Miller's presentation.

Toward the end of the conference, participants had the opportunity to respond to the draft of a new race relations statement. Paul Peachey, a sociologist and incoming pastor at Broad Street Mennonite Church, the African-American congregation in Harrisonburg, Virginia, presented a statement that took a position on the question of interracial marriage. Although he earlier had raised objections about mixed-race marriages because they were "foolish" and "inadvisable," Peachey put scripture before social objections in the official document.³⁹ In "The Way of Christian Love in Race Relations," Peachey took a small but significant shift away from past writing. Giving more attention to this topic than to any other specific point of application, he wrote, "On the question

of interracial marriage we [will] help our people to understand that the only Scriptural requirement for marriage is that it be 'in the Lord'; that there is no valid biological objection to interracial marriage." This clear statement of support did come with a caveat, however. The clause ended, "[A]nd that, as in all marriages, the social implications of any proposed union should receive careful consideration."⁴⁰ As thus amended, the 1955 document pointed to social considerations but placed interracial unions on equal footing with all marriages. With little debate, conference participants approved the document in Goshen, and churchwide delegates did the same four months later in Hesston, Kansas. Unlike several mainline Protestant groups, the Mennonite Church had removed explicit scriptural barriers to marriage across racial lines.⁴¹ Couples like Annabelle and Gerald Hughes had made concrete a previously intangible issue. 

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Continued on page 15 ...

Wilhelm Mannhardt wrote an important nineteenth-century defense of German Mennonite nonresistance, but he actually believed military service was important for fostering a German national identity, including Mennonites.

(Wilhelm Mannhardt og hans Samling av norske Folkesinne)



Wilhelm Mannhardt: German Mennonite Nationalist

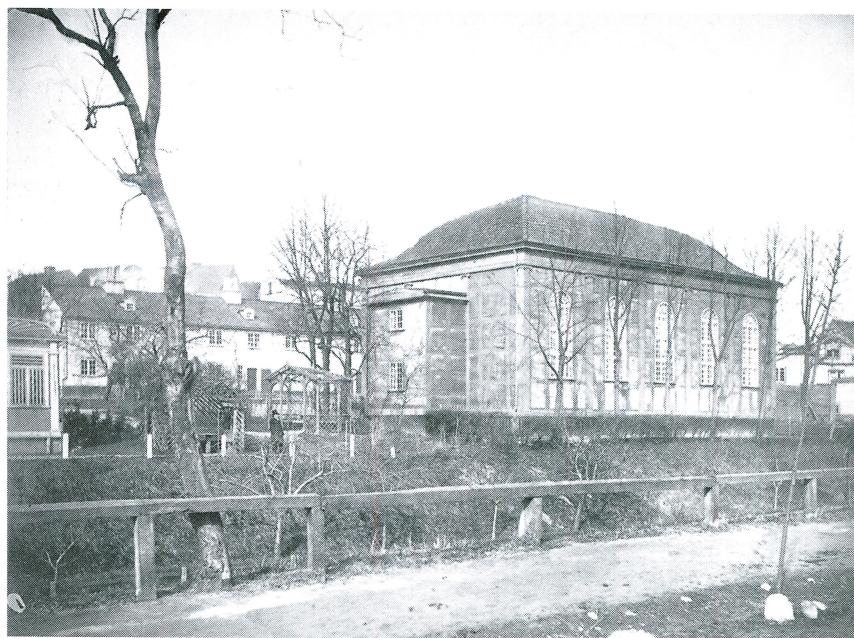
By Braden Hiebner

Wilhelm Mannhardt led a publicly compartmentalized life and held views that seemingly conflicted with Mennonite faith. He was born March 26, 1831, to Jakob and Adriana Mannhardt in the German territory of Schleswig, where his father was pastor of a Mennonite congregation at Friedrichstadt. When he was a child, Mannhardt's parents introduced him to folktales and mythology, which would later foster within him a sense of nationalism in a politically divided country. As an adult, Mannhardt became the first German Mennonite to earn a doctorate, befriended prominent mythologists, and wrote influential works on European agrarian mythology. Yet there is no evidence that he sought to identify any such customs among Mennonites. Mannhardt's most important religious work was a petition to the king on behalf of Prussian Mennonites to maintain their *Wehrfreiheit* (military exemption). Yet Mannhardt did not write it out of religious conviction but rather out of a sense of respect for the historical tradition of the Mennonites as a community. While seen by some as the savior of Mennonite military exemption, Mannhardt privately, and later publicly, wanted Mennonites to serve as military combatants in order to become part of the German nation. His life was a microcosm of the debates within German society attempting to find a balance among religion, politics, and attempts to develop a national identity.

When Mannhardt was five years old, his family moved to the Prussian city of Danzig when his father became pastor of the Mennonite congregation there. Mannhardt suffered from poor health throughout his life, afflicted with asthma and nerve weakness. During his many sick spells, he was confined to bed, where he listened to lectures and stories such as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, spawning an interest in mythology. His first contact with folksongs came through the pietist Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling's *Lebensgeschichte* and *Heimweh*, which included folk sayings and Oriental fairy tales. His parents encouraged his interests and bought him a book on German folktales. As part of Mannhardt's therapy, he went on nature walks in the countryside surrounding Danzig and became a student of the natural sciences.¹

Mannhardt's reading of Jung-Stilling's *Heimweh* was different from that of other Mennonites. The relationship between Jung-Stilling and the Mennonites was one of respect. Many of his characters were either Mennonite or possessed Mennonite characteristics of being simple, serious, and pious. In *Heimweh*, Jung-Stilling describes a great monarch who rules over Europe and Asia. However, this rule is being threatened by a secret organization based in France. *Heimweh* is the desire to reach the final kingdom of peace, which lies in the East. Some Mennonites in Russia took this story literally and immigrated to the region around the Aral Sea, wanting refuge from the anti-Christ and expecting the second coming of Jesus.² Many other Mennonites interpreted this work theologically rather than literally. But Mannhardt focused on the folk sayings and fairy tales found in *Heimweh*. Even at an early age, Mannhardt's world was being shaped by myth rather than religion.

In 1842, Mannhardt entered the only college preparatory high school in Danzig. His favorite subjects were the German language and literature, out of which he developed a sense of German nationalism.³ Naturally, he turned to the states of his childhood and his mother's homeland of Schleswig-Holstein. Both territories had large German populations, with Holstein being a member of the German confederation. But these territories were controlled by the Danish king, and the German



confederation and Denmark went to war over them in 1848 and 1864. Prussia defeated Denmark in the second war, establishing Schleswig-Holstein as part of the German Empire. Mannhardt turned to folklore as an outlet for his nationalist sentiments after one of his Danish friends used Nordic mythology and a desire to return to past glory as a justification for war.⁴ In a poem titled 1848, Mannhardt wrote, "I fight alas with heart and hand, there I would gladly die for my fatherland."⁵ He was not alone in seeking a united German nation; this very issue was prevalent among nineteenth-century German scholars, politicians, and ordinary citizens.

Mannhardt followed a long tradition of scholars linking myth with nationalism. Starting in the early eighteenth century, most people held a negative view of myth. Christians associated it with pagan fables and heathen religion, regarding all such things to be false. Pagan myth was either seen as an invention by the devil or, more commonly, a degenerative version of biblical truths. Others viewed myth as savage and foolish, a memorial to ancient peoples' failure to explain the world in which they lived.⁶ Others, however, such as poets, dramatists, writers, painters, and a select group of educated people, were interested in the heroic stories of early people. The most influential person in the early study of myth was the Italian humanist scholar Giambattista Vico, who believed that myth came from

The Mennonite church in the Prussian city of Danzig, where Wilhelm Mannhardt's father, Jakob, served as minister.

(Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton)



one's own inner self. He said myth was not an error, a degenerate truth, or the result of some misunderstanding; rather, it was a necessary and admirable stage of human development. Myth also became accepted as historically important. Both the Scottish classicist Thomas Blackwell and the English philologist Robert Lowth saw myth as being a literary record of religious beliefs or social codes for early societies.

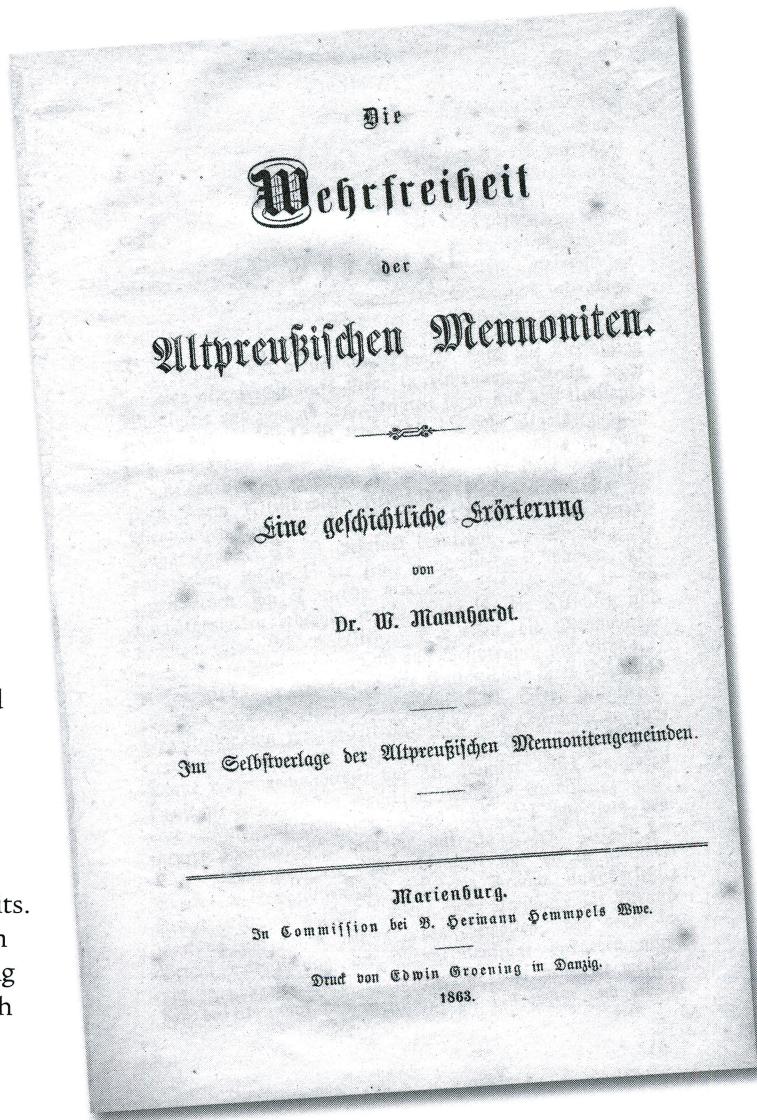
The study of myth would take hold strongest in Germany.⁷ Between 1795 and 1810, Germany became more culturally united, had a high and expanding level of intellectual activity, an increasing sense of loss of tradition, and a growing nationalist movement spurred by both the French Revolution and Napoleonic invasions. The study of myth also began to take on a modern religious identity. While earlier mythologists saw myth as an aspect of historical or natural growth, new mythologists saw myth as a means of redeeming humanity separated from a lost primeval unity. While they realized that a return to such a time was impractical, poets wrote about a universal harmony that could unite modern peoples.⁸ Mannhardt was particularly influenced by *Deutsche Mythologie* by Jakob Grimm, one half of the famous Brothers Grimm. In the preface to the second edition, Grimm argued for the continued study of other European, Eastern, and Indian mythology and stated that Germany's and other nations' mythologies were not inferior to that of Greece and Rome.⁹ Through his reading of *Deutsche Mythologie*, Mannhardt found "that German national greatness could be founded on an appreciation for and understanding of ancient Germanic religion."¹⁰ Mannhardt did groundbreaking work on European agricultural rituals and vegetative spirits. He gathered data on Central European planting and harvesting practices, using written records, interviews with French prisoners of war, and surveys mailed throughout Europe. Like Grimm, he discovered parallels between modern customs and ancient religious beliefs.

Right: Felix Mannhardt's *Die Wehrfreiheit der altpreußische Mennoniten, which defended German Mennonites from government attempts to revoke their exemptions from military service.*

(Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen)

Mannhardt found evidence that, in the early stage of human culture, people believed in the continuity between human and plant life. Vegetation was seen as a shell for the soul after death, and thus humans assigned it a central role in religious practices.¹¹

Meanwhile, the growing nationalist movement was threatening the Mennonites' cherished exemption from military service. After Prussia's 1848 revolution, the Mennonite *Wehrfreiheit* was considered a relic of the old regime, and Prussia's parliament proposed abolishing it, which had the support of Mennonite legislator Hermann von Beckerath. On September 14, 1848, a group of influential Mennonites met and wrote a petition that was signed by seven prominent pastors and



26 others, representing 12,000 Mennonites, maintaining their belief in nonresistance and threatening emigration to Russia if their status was not maintained. Throughout the 1850s, the “Mennonite Question” would be debated off and on in the Prussian parliament.¹² In 1861, legislation was once again introduced in Prussia to revoke the *Wehrfreiheit*, so the Danzig congregation proposed a letter explaining its position to both the government and the public.¹³ In 1863, Mannhardt, at the request of the provincial Prussian Mennonites, wrote *Die Wehrfreiheit der altpreußische Mennoniten* petitioning the king in order to maintain their military exemption.

Die Wehrfreiheit outlined the Mennonites' nonresistant faith and practice throughout the centuries.¹⁴ It also showed that military exemption was based on historical religious conviction and not political beliefs. Mannhardt argued that to revoke their agreement would violate the Mennonites' charter and the Prussian General Law Code. Under law, Mennonites must be compensated for the loss of their charter, but nothing could compensate their loss of religious freedom.¹⁵ Yet Mannhardt did not share this nonresistant belief. *Die Wehrfreiheit* gave a historical basis for Mennonite nonresistance and was meant to play a leading role in the discussion on the issue. Mannhardt noted that a problem with the letter was that it didn't answer the question about Mennonite military exemption: “Any critical comment on the contemporary situation of the Mennonites and formulation of possible solutions has been intentionally avoided at the express wish of the Prussian Mennonites, especially since in that case the intrusion of the subjective opinions of the author could not have been avoided.”¹⁶ He based his argument around the idea of freedom of conscience and threatened that any legislation passed that forced “conscious compulsion” would result in the “emigration from house and yard and out of the dear Fatherland.”¹⁷ He looked at the history of the Mennonite community and their tradition of nonresistance rather than from a purely theological perspective. In doing this, he looked at the Mennonite community in much the same way he would have looked at any other community in Europe that he studied.

In 1866, following the defeat of Austria in the Seven Weeks War, the Northern German Confederation was formed and required all able-bodied adult males to serve in the army. A proposal aimed at maintaining Mennonite *Wehrfreiheit* was defeated in the Confederation Parliament. In 1867, church leaders and influential members met and sent a delegation to Berlin to plead their case, but the delegation returned with a feeling that their military exempt status was lost. On November 26, 1868, a ministry decree forced Mennonites to serve in the military but allowed them to serve as noncombatants, such as hospital orderlies, office clerks, stewards, artisans, and drivers. They were also exempt from training with weapons.

Mennonite congregations responded in different ways. While the church in Danzig allowed individuals to choose whether and in what way they wanted to serve, portions of the rural congregations at Heubuden and Obernessau emigrated to the United States. There was no consensus on how or whether Mennonites who served as combatants would be punished. Pastor Peter Bartel of Montau-Gruppe attempted to require all baptismal candidates to serve as noncombatants; those who didn't would be kicked out of the church. A schism in 1871 resulted in 85 members who believed individuals could choose their own combatant status leaving the congregation. The number of Prussian Mennonite young men who chose combatant status would gradually rise throughout the following decades, reaching about 50 percent in 1914.¹⁸

Articles from the *Mennonitische Blätter*, edited by Jakob Mannhardt, Wilhelm's father, provide little evidence that Mennonite leaders were changing their minds about nonresistance and maintaining their military exemption prior to the events of 1867. Jakob Mannhardt started the *Mennonitische Blätter* in 1856 to create a sense of unity among German-speaking Mennonites and promote good relations with rural congregations. In 1857, he attended the Evangelical Alliance in Berlin, which brought together church leaders from across Europe and produced greater acceptance for different Protestant sects from the German monarchy. However, after the royal declaration forcing Mennonite service, Mannhardt openly lent his

He looked at the history of the Mennonite community and their tradition of nonresistance rather than from a purely theological perspective.



support to the king's proposal.¹⁹ In one article, he stated that noncombatant service allowed Mennonites to better express nonresistance. They previously had to find replacements to fight in their place; now they could show love for their neighbor by serving as noncombatants. He also wrote that noncombatants could defend themselves if attacked. Using the hypothetical situation of medics evacuating wounded soldiers, he wrote that they would not be acting against God if defending themselves or a wounded soldier because attacking the wounded is against international law.²⁰

Wilhelm Mannhardt agreed completely with his father but went even further in advocating full military service based on a new political situation and interpretation of the Bible. He believed that the Bible did not forbid all uses of the sword and that the Mennonites' goal of creating a "Heavenly Kingdom" would not be threatened by military service. He based many of his ideas on a "just war theory."²¹ According to Mannhardt, the Old Testament did not disapprove of armed conflict; rather, it showed that God led God's people in "holy war" against their enemies.²² Every person had the Christian obligation to defend self and neighbor. Only in this way could someone truly love the neighbor. Mannhardt applied this to the whole nation. If people did not kill out of anger, then their acts were not sinful. If they killed out of *Rechtsgefühl* (sense of justice), then it could be accepted as an obligation from God. But non-defensive wars were not justified by the just war theory. Mannhardt integrated this into the theory by saying that the state was just, and despite the individual's belief in right or wrong, the state—which had higher insight—should be obeyed. The individual could also be assured that the act would be justifiable in God's sight because to obey the state was to obey God.²³ Mannhardt wrote that it was the Kaiser's right to demand soldiers in defense of the empire and that it fit with Jesus' saying, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."²⁴

Mannhardt never accepted the idea of pacifism, but he was still somewhat active in the church. While he neglected to mention his religious life in the preface to his seminal

work *Gedichte*, Mannhardt included that his father was a Mennonite pastor and his later writing of *Die Wehrfreiheit*. Mannhardt would occasionally read sermons in church, and in 1857 he attended the Evangelical Alliance with his father in Berlin as part of a Mennonite delegation.²⁵ Yet despite the Mennonite community's increased participation in society, without serving in the military, they could never be true citizens. This hindered Mannhardt's dream of creating a truly united German nation. But aided by the rise of nationalism in Germany and the eventual revocation of the Mennonites' *Wehrfreiheit* by parliament, Mannhardt was able to make a biblical claim for combatant service. 

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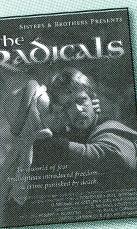


Heritage Preservation: A Resource Book for Congregations by David A. Haury

A companion piece to *Heritage Celebrations*, this 30-page manual provides direction for congregations to keep their important historical records, including what to keep and how to keep them. **\$5.00**

The Task of the Congregational Historian

A 16-page pamphlet with tips for documenting and preserving a congregation's history. **\$2.00**



The Radicals DVD The major motion picture about Margaretha and Michael Sattler and Anabaptism's birth in sixteenth-century Europe. Includes commentary by Myron Augsburger, interviews with the film's producers and other extras. Also available in Spanish. **\$29.99 plus shipping and handling (\$25 per copy for multiple copies)**



Menno Simons commemorative fraktur A teaching tool as well as artwork, this four-color fraktur (a traditional German calligraphic art form) celebrates the 500th anniversary of the birth

Menno Simons in 1596. Created by noted artist Roma J. Ruth, it features text from Menno's own words on Jesus as the Prince of Peace and incorporates in the border I Corinthians 3:11, Menno's favorite Scripture. **\$25.00 plus \$3.00 for shipping and handling. Add 50¢ per additional copy.** Also available as note cards. **\$3 for four, \$6.50 for 10, \$9 for 15, \$11 for 20.**

To order, contact: Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee
1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526
Phone: (574) 535-7477
E-mail: archives@goshen.edu

Or order online: www.MennoniteUSA.org/history

Student teachers

Before he garnered acclaim as an Anabaptist sociologist, John A. Hostetler received criticism from Harold S. Bender. Hostetler, then a student at Goshen College, submitted a paper on Amish baptism for the inaugural John Horsch Mennonite History Essay Contest. When the winners were announced in the summer of 1949, he was second in the college division because Bender, Goshen's legendary professor and administrator, considered Hostetler's submission "not a 'history' essay but a descriptive account." So first place went to Willard Krabill, another Goshen student who would become a well-known Mennonite physician.

Obviously Hostetler's Horsch contest finish didn't discourage him from a career in the social sciences. And the top prize didn't lead Krabill to a history-related profession. But that's not the point of the contest. Rather, the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee annually sponsors it to foster appreciation for and understanding of the great legacy of faith that has been bestowed on us as contemporary Mennonites.

That is the case for virtually everything the Historical Committee does. But the Horsch contest is special because it is designed specifically for students, high school through seminary and graduate school. It is cliché to say that students are our future, but it is true. As they learn, so will subsequent generations. That makes the contest

a vital component of the Historical Committee's program, even if it is a small one in terms of budget and staff time.

While the hope is students will gain insights from their research and writing, the church often also directly benefits from their scholarship. This issue of *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* is devoted to the Horsch contest, including excerpts from the two winning submissions, which address overlooked and unknown episodes from our past. In the cover story, Tobin Miller Shearer's important exploration of interracial marriage lays bare the frightening persistence and acceptance of prejudice among Mennonites, even as the church was awakening to the injustices suffered by people who were not white. Shearer provides a fascinating historical background to Mennonite Church USA's current emphasis to combat racism. In the second article, Braden Hiebner looks at Wilhelm Mannhardt, a nineteenth-century German Mennonite mythologist and nationalist. It's also a timely topic given our culture's prevailing notions of militaristic patriotism trumping the nonviolent and loving way of Christ.



Pray that Shearer, Hiebner, and all other students will continue to grow in knowledge and wisdom about our faith story—and pray that we will continue to learn from the students.—Rich Preheim



Mennonite Historical Bulletin

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www.MennoniteUSA.org/history

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